

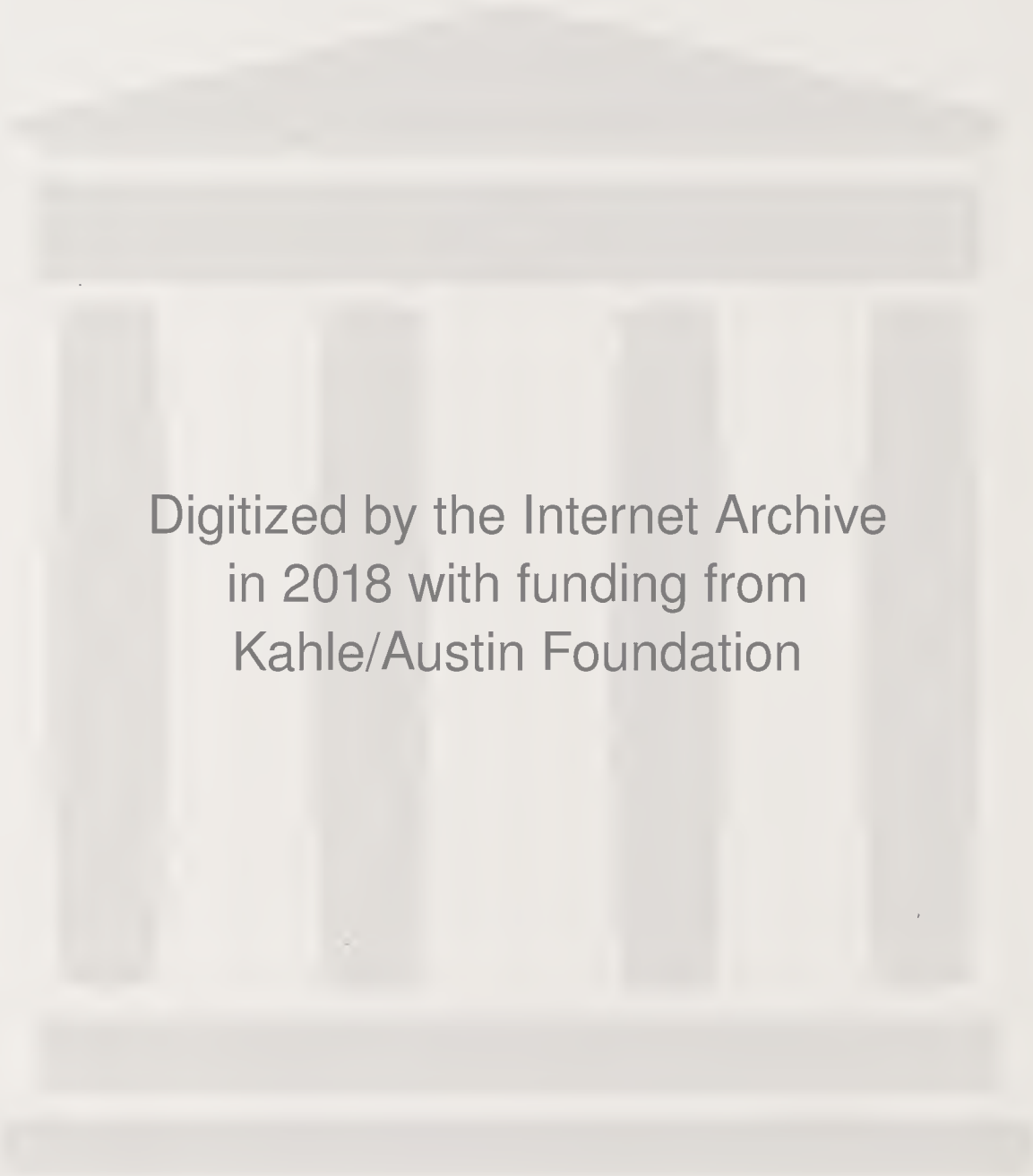
# **THE CRISIS**

**The True Story About How the World Almost Ended**

**A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS**

**by**

**JOHN SOMERVILLE**



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Quotations from *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis* by Robert F. Kennedy reprinted by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

### About the Author

John Somerville, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, City University of New York, is an internationally known scholar and author of ten books, translated into many languages. He has been a pioneer in developing the area of peace studies, and was invited by Unesco to contribute as author to three of its international projects concerned with strengthening world peace. The second edition of his book, The Philosophy of Peace, appeared in 1954 with Introductory Letters from Albert Einstein and Thomas Mann, in which Einstein said: "It is not only a careful analysis of the relevant moral and historic factors but also a sign of remarkable independence and courage. If your book should have the attention in this country it merits, it would counteract effectively the present state of hysterical fear and would lead to a more sane and constructive political attitude." Mann wrote: "Your book is something like a miracle . . . The critic who said that it should be a best seller is only too right. If it were, perhaps that could spare us decades of utter misery."

The Crisis has been published in Japanese and German translations; the first Japanese edition of fifty thousand copies was exhausted in three months. The date of its first stage production is November, 1976, in Japan.



## Preface

This play is about a decision that was taken by a group of men. The decision is a matter of historical record, and one of the members of the group, Robert F. Kennedy, left a completely frank account of how it was arrived at. The group was the Executive Committee of President Kennedy's National Security Council, presided over by the President himself. The problem faced by the group was that the Soviet government had sent a number of nuclear missiles to Cuba, and that bases were being constructed for them by Soviet technicians. This happened in 1962, about a year and a half after the Bay of Pigs assault upon Cuba. The decision that the "Ex Comm" group took was to initiate war against the Soviet Union unless she removed the missiles from Cuba or destroyed them.

The decision was presented to the Soviet government as a direct demand, an ultimatum; and the historical fact is that the Soviet government complied by removing the missiles. This success of the ultimatum was what was played up at the time, and subsequently in television spectacles, with strong manifestations of patriotic pride, and it is what has been remembered by the public. But what gives this decision a unique place among all the records of man is the kind of consequences those who took it expected would follow from it. They actually expected that the Soviet government would not obey the ultimatum, and that they themselves would then begin the nuclear war that they consciously expected would wipe out the human race. All this is clearly revealed and fully documented in Robert Kennedy's account which was published in 1968, six years after the crisis and a few months after his tragic death.



Since facts of this kind are extremely difficult to believe, even when plainly and bluntly acknowledged by unimpeachable testimony, I have used the following procedure where they directly enter the action of the play. I have placed in the appropriate margin of the text the number of the page of Robert Kennedy's book in which his account confirms the particular statement that is being made at that point in the play. Thus, anyone can easily check the historical accuracy of the central facts. Kennedy's work originally came out in McCall's magazine under the title "Thirteen Days: The Story About How the World Almost Ended," and was subsequently published in book form, with accompanying documents. The page numbers in our margins refer to the 1969 New American Library edition, Signet paperback.

It is far from easy to associate a decision of the kind that concerns us here with persons like John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Dean Rusk, Robert McNamara, Maxwell Taylor, Dean Acheson, Curtis LeMay, to mention some members of the "Ex Comm" group whose names are known and respected as leaders of very high place and reputation at home and abroad. True, they are all public figures whose political conduct in a democracy should and must be subjected to public scrutiny and public judgment in order that we may all know the truth about our own history and our future, if any. At the same time, we cannot help but feel certain inhibitions about dealing, in a play, with our own contemporaries, especially these. Leading figures among them, like John and Robert Kennedy, are rightly known as martyrs. They were struck down in the prime of life by bullets fired from abysmal depths of reactionary ignorance and bigotry, if not outright madness. It is therefore painful and costly to demonstrate an enormous mistake which they made, a mistake which almost cost the human race its life.

But common sense tells us it would be even more costly and painful to fail to demonstrate and discuss such a mistake. This is so not only because of its unique magnitude (a mistake that can lead to the end of the world is in a class by itself), but because Robert Kennedy himself took the utmost pains to set down all the facts. He does not draw the conclusion that they add up to an enormous mistake that must never be repeated, but no other conclusion can be drawn once the facts are set forth. However, it would seem that Robert Kennedy, even after the opportunity of six years of reflection on the crisis, was still blinded by the success of the ultimatum, and did not realistically evaluate what else was involved. I would like to believe, if only there were some evi-



dence for it, that he wanted us to realize that this temporary success was gained at the cost of an unprecedented failure charged with an eternal and infinite doom, which should be recognized as such. For it must be recognized without further delay lest it be repeated. Unless contemporary politics and contemporary drama are presented in their actual fusion in a situation of this kind there may be no future for either one, in the most literal sense.

In any case, the question remains: how could such a highly qualified group of leaders have taken the decision they did? My own belief is that they were carried away by panic, that they were victims of old habits and attitudes that were disastrous and suicidal in the new context of nuclear weapons. They realized the consequences, and really expected that the end of the world would be the result of their decision, but they were still unable to make a break with the old habits and attitudes. That is the real tragedy. That is the continuing crisis which hangs over the human horizon like a threatening, all-consuming cloud of lethal mist. It will do so until we face the new truth and learn its lesson. But the public seems to remain deaf, dumb and blind, while the administrations following Kennedy's have been as reckless as his.

I wrote this play in the summer of 1974, and immediately began the process of submitting it to American publishers, starting with some who had already published books of mine, but none would accept it. It has since been returned by more than a dozen, and continues to be returned in spite of the fact that it has been published in both German and Japanese translation, with the first Japanese edition of fifty thousand copies selling out in three months.

It is self-evident that this could not have happened were the play uninteresting as a play, or incapable of making its way on the commercial market. Why, then, have so many American publishers refused to touch it? There can be no reason other than that they are afraid of the horrible truth that it tells, the truth that was suppressed in the TV spectacles. This sounds strange, considering all the revelations of high crimes and corruption that have found their way into print in our country, especially in the wake of Watergate and Vietnam.

Yet the fact is that this truth is more horrible than anything that happened in Watergate or Vietnam. Strictly speaking, it is more horrible than anything that has ever happened in the entire preced-

ing history of humankind. What could be more horrible than the fact that a small group of men, American men, deliberately took a decision which they consciously expected would result in "the death of the children of this country and all the world . . . whose lives would be snuffed out like everyone else's," a decision which would result in plunging the world into "the abyss of nuclear destruction and the end of mankind"? (These are their own words.) The publishers who returned the manuscript know that they cannot deny this; they simply lack the courage to face its plain implications, and to publish them.

For this reason I have decided to use the royalties from the Japanese edition to print this present American edition in order to put it into the hands of some of my own countrymen. In this printing, in addition to indicating the page numbers of Robert Kennedy's book where they confirm what is being said at that point in the play, I have placed, as footnotes at the bottom of our relevant pages, the exact passages in Robert Kennedy's own words, so that there will be no doubt in anyone's mind that the play is telling the truth.

I would like to dedicate this edition to the conscience of America, for I still think America must have a conscience.

## CAST

(In order of appearance)

Lois, Assistant to Miss Sheldon.

Miss Sheldon, Secretary to the President.

The President of the United States.

Steve, a Harvard Senior, majoring in government.

Walter, a CIA agent.

Attorney General of the United States.

Director of the CIA.

General, representing the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

American Ambassador to the United Nations.

Secretary of State.

Secretary of Defense.

President's adviser on Soviet affairs.

President's adviser on national security.

Former Secretary of State.

Air Force Chief of Staff.

Soviet Ambassador to the United States.

Voice on intercom.

Voice of radio announcer.

Voice of middle aged woman, on radio.

Voice of young man, on radio.





## ACT I

*Scene 1. The President's Office. His secretary, an attractive middle-aged woman, is putting papers and documents on the President's desk and table at the beginning of the working day, before his arrival. Her assistant Lois, a pretty girl, comes in to help her.*

LOIS: Good morning, Miss Sheldon. *(The secretary pauses in her labors, turns towards the girl, and takes a few deep sniffs.)*

MISS SHELDON: I'll say it's good. I can smell you from here, Lois. What in the world have you doused yourself with? It makes me think of Woolworth's cosmetic counter rather than the President's Office. Would this have anything to do with the new interne from Harvard who's supposed to be learning about government from the inside? Do you think he'll need that much stimulation?

LOIS: I'm sorry, Miss Sheldon. I didn't realize . . .

MISS SHELDON: Oh, it's all right for the victim's first day, but don't make it a habit. The President won't notice, but let's hope our resident scholar gets the message. By the way, where is he? It's almost nine o'clock. Would you happen to know whether he was out late last night? *(Phone rings, and Miss Sheldon picks it up.)* Thank you, Jim. *(Puts receiver back.)* Well, he's got just about one minute to get here if he wants to arrive before the boss on his first day. The President just came in the front door.

LOIS: I'll see if he's in the waiting room. He wasn't there when I came through. The only one was that man from the CIA. He wouldn't tell me what he wants.

MISS SHELDON: I know. He got here before I did, and won't talk to anyone but the President. Look in there again, and be sure the big calendar says October 16, 1962. *(Lois exits. From the other side, enter the President, with his hand on the shoulder of a smiling, socially confident young man of twenty-one.)*

YOUNG MAN: Yes, sir. They're still doing that. No sign of that changing.



PRESIDENT (*laughing*): I see. Well, good luck on your internship, Steve. (*Shakes hands with Steve.*) Remember me to your mother.

STEVE: Thank you, sir, I will. (*Steve exits, and President turns to Miss Sheldon.*)

PRESIDENT: Good morning, Meg. This place smells like the flowers of spring.

MISS SHELDON: Good morning, Mr. President. I didn't think you'd notice. It's Lois. I'm afraid she's got designs on our new interne. Shall I speak to her?

PRESIDENT: No. Let nature and Harvard take their course. He's got more than one thing to learn about how the government operates. Is anyone waiting?

MISS SHELDON: Yes, sir. The man from the CIA who won't talk to anyone but you.

PRESIDENT: OK. Let it not be said that the government kept the government within the government waiting. Let him be first.

MISS SHELDON: Yes, sir. (*She goes to the door leading to the waiting room, and lets in a man carrying an attaché case. She continues arranging things in the office.*)

CIA MAN: Good morning, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: Hello, Walter. What have you got for me now?

WALTER (*looking at a corner of the office where there are chairs and a small table farthest away from Miss Sheldon*): May we sit down for a moment, Mr. President? (*President looks surprised, but says nothing, and goes to the corner where they sit down. Walter whispers something to the President as he gives him the attaché case. The President lays the case on the table, opens it, and takes out a sealed envelope lying on top of a number of documents, breaks open the envelope, takes out a sheet of paper, and starts to read it.*)

PRESIDENT: Well I'll be damned. (*Reads a little further.*) I'll be damned. (*Turns to Walter.*) Tell John I'm looking through these things, and he'll hear from me this morning. Thank you, Walter. (*Exit Walter.*) Meg, Get Bobby on the phone right away.

MISS SHELDON: Yes, sir. (*Exits to anteroom. President takes attaché case to his desk, and sits down.*)

PRESIDENT (*staring at the paper in his hand as he reads further*): Impossible! (*Intercom buzzes.*) Yes?

VOICE OF MISS SHELDON: I have the Attorney General on the line now.

PRESIDENT: Good. *(Picks up phone.)* Bobby? Listen. Come  
(23) over here right away. We're in deep trouble. *(Pause.)* I'll tell you  
when you get here. Good. *(Hangs up, then speaks on intercom.)*  
Will you come in, Meg, and bring your pad? *(Enter Miss Sheldon.)*  
Meg, freeze everything on the ordinary calendar. I'm calling an  
emergency meeting in the Cabinet Room this morning, let's say  
for 11:45. Everybody ought to be able to make it by then if you  
notify them right away. Tell them it's an emergency, and that I  
don't want any excuses.

MISS SHELTON: Yes, sir. All the members of the Cabinet?

PRESIDENT: No, only some of them. I'll give you the list. This is  
(30) not a Cabinet meeting, and they're not to advertise they're coming  
here. I'll tell Bobby. You call the Secretary of State, the Secretary  
of Defense, the Director of the CIA, the Secretary of the Treasury,  
and let the Secretary of State bring in the Under Secretary, Deputy  
Under Secretary and Assistant Secretary, and from Defense let the  
Secretary bring in the Deputy and Assistant Secretaries, and get the  
adviser on national security and the Presidential Counsel. And we'll  
want the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and whomever else  
he needs. Yes, and let's bring in the Vice President, the adviser on  
Soviet affairs, and the Ambassador to the United Nations. *(Phone  
rings. Miss Sheldon picks it up.)*

MISS SHELTON: The Attorney General is here, sir.

PRESIDENT: Fine. You ring those people, and tell Bobby to come  
right in. *(Exit Miss Sheldon. Enter Attorney General.)*

ATTORNEY GENERAL: What's up? Something smelled sweet  
enough as I came in.

PRESIDENT: God, it's nothing like that. You won't believe what  
it is. I don't know whether I believe it myself.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: What is it?

PRESIDENT: The whole CIA apparatus is convinced the Russians  
are putting missiles and atomic weapons in Cuba.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: The bastards wouldn't dare!

PRESIDENT: Maybe they would and maybe they wouldn't. I've  
(23) called a special meeting for 11:45. Meg has the list. Tell me if you  
want to add anyone. We'll let the CIA put their whole case to us  
before I decide what to do.

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23 . . . "He said only that we were facing great trouble."

30 . . . The full list includes these and a few others.

23 . . . "At 11:45 that same morning, in the Cabinet Room, a formal  
presentation was made by the CIA . . . That was the beginning

(23) ATTORNEY GENERAL: This could be the beginning of the end of the world.

PRESIDENT (*musings*): He may learn a lot more than I thought.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Who? What do you mean?

PRESIDENT: The new interne — a Harvard senior majoring in government, the target of Lois' perfume that you smelled when you came in.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Oh, that's what it was. Well, even Yale wouldn't have prepared him for Soviet missiles in Cuba. What will we have to do?

PRESIDENT: We'll damn well do whatever we have to do. Between now and 11:45 you and I are going to go through this stuff the CIA just sent over here and see what we can make of it before the meeting. (*End of scene.*)

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of the Cuban missile crisis . . . which brought the world to the abyss of nuclear destruction and the end of mankind."



*Scene 2. The Cabinet Room, the same morning. A dozen men are seated around a big table. Before each of them are papers and writing implements, a cup and saucer or water glass, an ash tray. Some are smoking. To the side is a blackboard with a large map of Cuba hanging from it, alongside a blown-up photograph of an open field. Along each of the two long sides of the field runs a heavy black line that appears to be something like a trench. Close to each line, along its inner side are distributed what looks like a number of mounds or piles. Within the field, in rows, are a number of patches, all shaped alike. The Director of the CIA is standing before the blackboard, pointer in hand. The discussion has already been going on for some time.*

DIRECTOR OF CIA (*pointing to a city on the map*): This is San Cristobal, where the photos were taken from above by the U-2. (*Points at photo.*) This is photo 1, where a missile base is being constructed.

(24) PRESIDENT: Couldn't it be a football field? It looks like it. (*Several exclamations from others, indicating like feelings.*)

DIRECTOR OF CIA: Yes, but they're not going to play football there. The lines on the long sides of the field could be nothing but hangars, almost ready for use. In these little piles distributed along the lines is part of what's going to go into the hangars. The missile parts are in those piles, and each pile is covered by tarpaulin. The peculiar shaped patches on the field could be nothing but the bases of launching pads. When the new batch of photos comes in tomorrow you'll see the progress they've made. But we already know that sites of this kind are for surface-to-surface missiles with atomic warheads. There can be no doubt about it. Everything fits, and all our sources agree.

MAN IN UNIFORM OF GENERAL: Everything we have points in the same direction, Mr. President. The Joint Chiefs are convinced that action must be taken before the communists get any further with that construction, before we see warheads on the launching pads, ready to be fired.

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: What kind of action?

24 . . . "President Kennedy remarked that it looked like a football field."

(36) GENERAL: There's only one kind of action that will do the job. Hit them from the air.

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: In other words, war?

(36) GENERAL: You could call it that, but I don't think they'll fight back when they see we mean business.

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: The trouble is, if you're wrong about that, there will be no one left to do anything else.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Mr. President, although I think the evidence that these are missile bases has already passed the point of reasonable doubt, I still can't get used to it. Just a few weeks ago the Soviet Ambassador, Dobrynin himself, was in my office. You remember the coincidence. That day he came to see me was the very one that you and I, with the Secretaries of State and Defense, had just had a conference about the military supplies the Russians were sending to Cuba. As I afterwards reported to you and the two Secretaries, I took advantage of the occasion to tell Dobrynin that we in the Administration were deeply concerned about the amount and character of the equipment that was being sent.

SECRETARY OF STATE: I remember your report very well.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE: So do I.

(25) ATTORNEY GENERAL: But he not only told me we had nothing to worry about. He specifically said he was instructed by Khrushchev to assure the President that there would be no surface-to-surface missiles or offensive weapons sent to Cuba. And I reminded him that we were closely watching all that was going on, and that any effort to put missiles in Cuba could lead only to catastrophe. He said to me flatly that there would be no such efforts.

PRESIDENT: Yes. I remember, and it eased my mind a great deal at the time. I suppose that's what it was for.

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36 . . . "The members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff were unanimous in calling for immediate military action . . . General Curtis LeMay, Air Force Chief of Staff, argued strongly with the President that a military attack was essential. When the President questioned what the response of the Russians might be, General LeMay assured him there would be no reaction."

25 . . . "He (Dobrynin) told me I should not be concerned, for he was instructed by Soviet Chairman Khrushchev to assure President Kennedy that there would be no ground-to-ground missiles . . . placed in Cuba."



ADVISER ON SOVIET AFFAIRS: Mr. President, my records  
(27) show that on September 11 an official public statement was issued in Moscow explicitly saying there was no necessity for nuclear missiles to be sent to Cuba, or any country outside the USSR.

PRESIDENT: September 11th? Of course. It was just around that  
(27) time that someone from the Soviet Embassy who had been to Moscow brought me a personal message from Khrushchev assuring me no surface-to-surface missiles would be placed in Cuba. (*Exclamations around the table: "My God", "We've been taken", "Talk about Hitler's lies", "We've been had!"*)

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: Mr. President, I can feel the temperature rising in this room, but before we work ourselves up any further, may I say something that I think we need to consider?

PRESIDENT: Certainly. Go ahead. That's what this meeting is for. We want to consider everything. (*Attorney General passes a note to the President.*)

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: First, I want to say I'm not at all sure of what we should do even if we are absolutely certain that there are surface-to-surface missiles with atomic warheads in Cuba. I suspect there are, and I am willing to proceed on the assumption that the missiles are in fact there, and that we have in fact been lied to. But, in proceeding in that way, may we assume, Mr. President, that you will not take any irreversible step until there is no longer any possible doubt, not only no reasonable doubt, about the technical facts? I mean, that what the photos show are indeed missile sites for surface-to-surface missiles with atomic warheads?

PRESIDENT: You certainly have my word on that. But you say that even when we're absolutely certain we're dealing with surface-to-surface nuclear missiles you're not at all sure of what we should do. Does that mean you're sure of what we shouldn't do?

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: Yes, it does, Mr. President. I feel sure we shouldn't start a war over it. (*The following comments break in rapidly.*)

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27 . . . "On September 11 Moscow stated there would be no need for nuclear missiles to be transferred to . . . Cuba."

27 . . . "An important official in the Soviet Embassy, returning from Moscow, brought me a personal message from Khrushchev to President Kennedy, stating he wanted the President to be assured that under no circumstances would surface-to-surface missiles be sent to Cuba."

DIRECTOR OF THE CIA.: You mean we should wait 'til they fire the missiles at us?

GENERAL: What have we got weapons for?

ADVISER ON SOVIET AFFAIRS: They won't respect anything except strength.

ADVISER ON NATIONAL SECURITY: Why did they tell us all those lies if their intentions were honorable?

SEVERAL OTHER VOICES, EXCITEDLY: Wait a minute. Not so fast. One at a time.

PRESIDENT: Give the Ambassador a chance. I would welcome any way of solving this problem that didn't involve war, if there is such a way. When I think of the consequences of nuclear war, I'm not in a hurry to drop bombs on anybody else's nuclear missiles. On the other hand, I won't be blackmailed by anybody's missiles, either. Let's hear the Ambassador's reasoning.

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: Mr. President, my reasoning proceeds from facts that some people seem to have forgotten. I mean, we've already got the draw on the Russians in the matter of nuclear missiles. We've got missiles with atomic warheads in Turkey, on (49) their very border. We've got similar missiles in Italy and other western countries, and we can also hit them from our bases in the East. Both we and they have enough atomic weapons to devastate both our countries, even if we had no Turkish bases and they had no Cuban bases. Frankly, I just don't see that Soviet bases in Cuba are going to change the balance of power. I don't think we need to take any military action, nor do I think we have a good legal case. After all, Cuba is a sovereign state and a member of the United Nations. There's no law against her having missiles.

SECRETARY OF STATE: You mean you trust them?

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: In relation to what you have in mind, Mr. Secretary, I don't trust any nation. The only thing I trust any nation to do is to follow its own interests and, when it is physically able, to defend its own rights. I've been dealing with the Russians for some time in the United Nations, and I've never gained the impression that they think it's in their interest to attack us with nuclear weapons. They know as well as we do that an all-out nuclear war would end everything. But I have gained the impression that

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49 . . . "Adlai Stevenson . . . strongly advocated . . . that we make it clear to the Soviet Union that if it withdrew its missiles from Cuba, we would be willing to withdraw our missiles from Turkey and Italy and give up our naval base at Guantanamo Bay."



they believe they're a sovereign state, that is, they believe they are entitled to equal rights with us. I think their case boils down to this: If we have bases in Turkey, why can't they have bases in Cuba? As a lawyer, I would have to say that their case is not a bad one.

SEVERAL VOICES, EXCITEDLY: What about our case? How can you say that? Haven't you forgotten a few things? Didn't Khrushchev say he'd bury us?

PRESIDENT: One at a time. I recognize the Adviser on National Security.

ADVISER ON NATIONAL SECURITY: Thank you, Mr. President. I just want to ask the Ambassador: If the picture is as harmless as he says it is, why did they tell us all those lies?

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: For the same reason, I would guess, that we lied to them in the previous administration about our U-2 spy planes over their territory until they brought down one of them, and then we had to admit it. Or, let's face it, for the same reason that we in this administration lied to them when we denied we were organizing, financing, equipping and training a force to invade Cuba, until the Bay of Pigs happened, and then we had to admit that.

DIRECTOR OF THE CIA: Mr. President, let me point out . . .

(88) PRESIDENT: No, John, I don't want you to argue that with the Ambassador. The Bay of Pigs was a mistake, and I acknowledged that to Krushchev himself in Vienna. He knows what I think about that. Go ahead with your point, Mr. Ambassador, but you don't need to argue the Bay of Pigs.

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: Mr. President, the point I'm trying to make doesn't depend on the particular examples. It's a general rule that's established by innumerable examples, the general rule that all nations try to keep military secrets, and to do so they deliberately tell lies, especially to their adversaries, in times of peace as well as war. That's not moral, but it's normal.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE: I don't think the people we are dealing with in this case are exactly normal. We know what they stand for, and Khrushchev himself publicly boasted of it in the very United Nations that the Ambassador referred to. Khrushchev said he's going to bury us, and I don't think he said it with

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88 . . . "He (Khrushchev) made reference to the landing at the Bay of Pigs, and the fact that President Kennedy had told him in Vienna that this was a mistake."

(34) a smile. I don't mean I'm in favor of an immediate air attack, but we've got to get those missiles out of there, and quick, before they become operational, and it may well take an air strike to do it in the end. But the best thing now would be some course of action that didn't involve dropping bombs, but would put enough pressure on them to take the missiles out themselves. Meanwhile, we're ready to carry out air strikes and an invasion of the island at short notice. As you know, we have atomic bombers in the air on continuous patrol.

PRESIDENT: We'll take a break now, and get something to eat. Don't all leave at the same time, and don't have a long line of limousines parking in the same place while we're here. We don't want the press or Congress to get the idea that anything special is going on. We'll call this group the Executive Committee of the National Security Council, Ex Comm, for short. We'll convene again at four, and be sure to cancel your appointments for this evening. I don't know how long this will take. We'll just have to breathe, eat and sleep this thing until I can make a decision, strengthened by the best advice you can give me.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Mr. President, it looks as if you'll have lots of different kinds of advice, but the final decision will have to be yours.

PRESIDENT: I know. And when I make that decision, I've got to keep in mind, and you've got to keep in mind not only that it's life and death that I have to decide, but that I'll be deciding  
(99) it for the whole United States, for the whole Soviet Union, for Turkey, for Nato, and really for all mankind. If we go to war against the Soviet Union we must expect it to be a nuclear war and a world war. No man, woman or child on earth will escape the consequences of what the United States decides to do or not do about this matter. That's where nuclear power and nuclear responsibility have brought us. Mankind has no way to avoid the power, and we have no way to avoid the responsibility.

GENERAL: I think mankind is lucky that we've got the power and responsibility.

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34 . . . "Secretary McNamara . . . argued: Perhaps that course of action (air strikes) would turn out to be inevitable. But let's not start with that course."

99 . . . "we were deciding, the President was deciding, for the U.S., the Soviet Union, Turkey, Nato and really for all mankind . . ."

PRESIDENT: That remains to be seen. Before we leave now, let me sum up my understanding of your opinions so far. There is a  
 (31) majority for the view that the government of the United States cannot and should not accept the presence of the Soviet missiles in Cuba, and that it's our responsibility to get them out of there even if it takes a war to do it. And we have a minority view that no military measures are necessary, as Soviet missiles in Cuba would not significantly alter the balance of power. If anyone thinks my summation might be inaccurate, we can take a poll. *(Pause; no one speaks.)* All right, we'll adjourn until four o'clock, with God's help, and we're going to need it. *(End scene.)*

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31 . . . "Most felt, at that stage, that an air strike against the missile sites could be the only course. Listening to the proposals, I passed a note to the President: 'I now know how Tojo felt when he was planning Pearl Harbor'."



*Scene 3. Lois' apartment, that evening. Studio bed room in half light. Lois and Steve are in bed. Their tone is relaxed.*

STEVE: Lois, do you like to talk, afterwards?

LOIS: Sure, Steve. Do you?

STEVE: Yes. Things come to me. I always get a lot of thoughts.

LOIS: Do you have a lot of experience?

STEVE: Don't get me wrong. I'm not boasting.

LOIS: I know. I was just a little curious. What kind of thoughts do you get?

STEVE: I can never predict. I guess it depends on what's been happening.

LOIS: What thoughts are you getting now?

STEVE: You know, you have a logical mind. That's exactly the question you should have asked.

LOIS: You mean, even though I never went to Harvard?

STEVE: You're too self-conscious about not going to college. College isn't what's important, even Harvard. You might have learned twice as much, wherever you were, than all the girls in Radcliffe.

LOIS: Where did you get those ideas?

STEVE: Not from Harvard. I think for myself. But I get some help from Harvard, in spite of Harvard.

LOIS: I bet you had some help from somebody, to get to be an interne in the President's office.

STEVE: It's my mother's money. She does everything for me, but I don't see her much, and I never talk to her, like this, I mean.

LOIS: I guess not.

STEVE: It's funny. She doesn't even know what I think. I mean, what I really think.

LOIS: Well, neither do I, for that matter. What do you really think? What did you think about after we made love?

STEVE: I began to think about the President.

LOIS: How romantic! What did you think about him?

STEVE: It was a question: What is he really doing? What's he trying to do?

LOIS: Right now he's trying to prevent Russian missile bases in Cuba.

STEVE: What do you mean, prevent Russian missile bases in Cuba?

LOIS: They found out that the Russians are beginning to construct bases for atomic missiles in Cuba. Of course, it's a top secret.

STEVE: How did you get to know it?

LOIS: It's my logical brain. When I got the job with Miss Sheldon last year there was an awful lot of competition, and the biggest dream of my life was to hold on to that job. I figured that the best way to do it was to know everything that was going on, just what everyone's problem was in the office, so I would know how to help, and not step on anyone's toes. You know?

STEVE: Of course. Very intelligent. I like your mind as well as your body.

LOIS: Thanks. So when I typed things, I would really try to understand what they said, and when I filed or duplicated anything I would look it over carefully to try to get the drift of what it was. It put a sort of strain on my mind, but it made the work very interesting, like a game. I began to see why people acted the way they did, and I was even able to predict sometimes what they would do.

STEVE: Hey, that's great. I like you more and more. And that's how you got to know about the Russian missile bases in Cuba?

LOIS: Of course, just as a part of my job. I don't steal anything, or break into someone else's files. I just try to understand what I'm working on, what comes to Miss Sheldon and me. She's very nice. I like her very much. Shouldn't we take a shower?

STEVE: No. I like it here in bed. You smell much better than with all that perfume on. Let's eat some of your apples there. *(Lois reaches him an apple from a fruit bowl on the night table, and takes one for herself. They begin to eat.)* This is the way it was in the Garden of Eden.

LOIS: You're the first one I ever told anything like that. I wonder why I did. I never should have.

STEVE: You had to. You're following the script of the Garden of Eden. "They ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." You're teaching me what I want to learn. You're better than any Harvard professor, don't you see? I want to know how

these people in Washington really think, beginning with the President. They're running the world, but in what direction? Towards what? What's the goal? It's safe to tell me what you know. I'm not with them; I'm with you. I came to judge the President, and to love you. God, that sounds like something from Dostoevsky, but it's true. I'll never blame you, like crummy Adam, and I'll never tell anyone you told me your secrets.

LOIS: You'd better not. I'd deny it anyway. Dostoevsky. I have a book by him.

STEVE: Which one?

LOIS: Crime and Punishment.

STEVE: How did you like it?

LOIS: The story was good, but how do you pronounce all those names?

STEVE: It doesn't matter. And neither does the story. It's the philosophy that counts.

LOIS: I don't know much about philosophy.

STEVE: Yes, you do. You just don't know it's philosophy. Philosophy is how you look at things, what they really mean to you. What I want to find out here is the philosophy of the President, and the others who are running things. Harvard thinks I came here to learn the mechanics of government, and my mother thinks I'm here to prepare for the Senate seat she can buy.

LOIS: And I'm here because I had to find a job when my parents got killed.

STEVE: How did that happen?

LOIS: In an automobile. How else?

STEVE: Did you love them?

LOIS: I think so. I took them for granted, mainly. But I certainly missed them. Have you got a father?

STEVE: No. He liberated me by dying when I was three. What else have you got in that fruit bowl? Is that a banana?

LOIS: Yes. (*Hands Steve one, and takes one for herself.*) But let's not make any jokes about it. I don't think sex is wrong, but I can't stand dirty jokes.

STEVE: Did you think what I said about the Garden of Eden was dirty?

LOIS: No. That wasn't dirty. I liked what you said.



STEVE: Thanks. Let's get back to the President. I bet he wants to start a war because Communist Cuba invited Communist Russia to set up Communist missiles in Communist Cuba.

LOIS: I think they're trying to decide whether they should go to war about it or not.

STEVE: You see what I mean? Look at the philosophy behind that. God, everybody knows that if America and Russia go to war against each other with all their atomic weapons the world will be destroyed. So what are they trying to decide? They're trying to decide whether they should end the world because one communist country sets up missile bases in another communist country.

LOIS: But it does sound dangerous, doesn't it?

STEVE: Where's the danger?

LOIS: Well, they're communists, and they could shoot them at us.

STEVE: And if they did?

LOIS: That would start an atomic war.

STEVE: And then?

LOIS: That would be the end of the world.

STEVE: Then our whole philosophy would be that we must end the world before they do.

LOIS: I didn't think of it that way.

STEVE: Well, you'd better, because that's the way it is.

LOIS: I'm going to take a shower.

STEVE: Let's take a shower after.

LOIS: OK.

STEVE: As long as you don't put perfume on again after that.

LOIS: Why should I? No use wasting bullets on a dead wolf. Look. I just made up a proverb.

STEVE: You're a genius. I wish you'd come to Radcliffe.

LOIS: Maybe I will. (*End scene.*)

## ACT II

*Scene 1. The Cabinet Room, the next day. With the addition of a former Secretary of State, the same persons are standing around the table, or seated at it, looking tired, taut and worried. Some are conversing rather heatedly. Others are carefully studying papers. As the President enters, those standing go to their seats, and all look at him intently.*

PRESIDENT: Gentlemen, as a result of yesterday's meetings, the Secretary of Defense has a concrete proposal, and I think we should all hear it.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE: Mr. President, I will come right to the point. I think I have found what I was looking for yesterday. As you know, I hold the view the great majority of us here hold — that some kind of positive action, military action, must be taken without delay. But it should not be the kind of military action that automatically triggers off a shooting war. However, it should be the kind that prevents a further build-up of missiles inside Cuba. It should also be the kind that gives the Russians a last chance to destroy or take home those they've brought in before we have to bomb them and open up a war.

ADVISER ON NATIONAL SECURITY: That's a good shopping list, but where can you find all that in one package?

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE: In a naval blockade of Cuba. Our war ships can make a blockade effective on the high seas five hundred miles or more from the coast of Cuba, and we can publicly announce that no ship will be allowed to pass that line with any offensive weapons bound for Cuba. All ships going to Cuba will thus be subject to our inspection. Any that try to resist or evade it will be dealt with by force, and destroyed if necessary. We can call it a quarantine.

ADVISER ON NATIONAL SECURITY: Quarantine. That's good. It recalls Roosevelt's "Quarantine the aggressor" of World War II.



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE: This will convince the communists that we mean business from the start. They will understand that if we are prepared to bomb the ships that transport missiles to Cuba, we are also prepared to bomb the missile bases in Cuba. That will give them food for thought, and may lead them to re-consider their  
 (34) position. In any case, it will give us a little time to consider further steps, and will leave us in control of events. I mean, if they don't respond favorably, and we see that they're pushing their missile bases to completion, we can go into the air strikes and the ground invasion at any time. The Department of Defense has made all the necessary plans for such a contingency.

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: An armed blockade on the high seas is in itself an act of war, is it not?

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE: Technically, it is. But you see there's an off-chance that they might not challenge it, and that they might remove their bases, and then no shooting war would ever develop. I'm not saying I expect them to do that, but it would be such a damn good thing if they would that I think the blockade is worth trying, as a last attempt to prevent nuclear war, even if there's only a slim chance that it might work.

GENERAL: Mr. President, I see a number of dangers in this idea, and they all feed into one fact that could be fatal. They give the communists time, and those bastards may have their missiles ready before we know it. In the first place, if we announce this blockade, or quarantine, or whatever we call it, the Russians might immedi-  
 (35) ately announce the same thing in relation to Berlin. They could make that as effective on land as we could make ours at sea. In the second place, they could reply that if we want them to remove their missiles from Cuba, we'll have to remove ours from Turkey, as the reciprocal act.

SECRETARY OF STATE: They might well do both those things at the same time.

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34 . . . "Secretary McNamara . . . argued that it (the blockade) was limited pressure which could be increased as the circumstances warranted . . . it would be understood, yet still leave us in control of events."

35 . . . "Their most forceful argument was that our installation of a blockade around Cuba invited the Russians to do the same in Berlin. If we demanded the removal of missiles from Cuba as the price for lifting our blockade, they would demand the removal of missiles surrounding the Soviet Union as the reciprocal act."

GENERAL: Exactly. And that would begin a lengthy period of negotiations during which every nuclear missile at present in Cuba could be assembled on a launching pad, targeted to an American city, and made ready to fire. The photos that arrived during our meeting last night convinced us all, including the Ambassador to the United Nations, that we're really dealing with missile bases, and that there are several sets of them in different parts of the island.

(35) The latest count of nuclear missiles that have a range of more than a thousand miles, more than a thousand miles, shows at least sixteen, and possibly as many as thirty-two already on the ground. Our best experts confirm that these missiles could be made operational within one week, not to speak of shorter-range missiles.

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: But ask yourself: what would they have to gain by firing these missiles? We already have the Russians surrounded by our missiles in far greater numbers. It would be suicide for them, and for the Cubans as well. Why should they want to start a war?

GENERAL (*raising his voice*): I say, take no chances. It is the considered opinion of our experts that if all the missiles at present in  
(36) Cuba were fired at us, eighty million Americans would be dead in a few minutes. Mr. President, I just don't see how a naval blockade can meet a situation of this kind. And I'm not saying that just be-  
(37) cause I'm an Army man. We have with us today a most distinguished civilian statesman who served for four years as Secretary of State in President Truman's administration. May I ask him to give us the benefit of his experience and wisdom as to what course we should follow in this matter?

PRESIDENT: Certainly. That's why I invited him here.

FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE: Mr. President, I'm not going to make a long speech. I haven't the right to.

SEVERAL VOICES: We want you to. Go ahead. No one is better qualified.

FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE: But I feel I have a duty to say one thing, and I'm going to put it as bluntly as I can because I

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35 . . . "installations with at least 16, and possibly 32, missiles of over a thousand-mile range."

36 . . . "the estimate was that within a few minutes of their being fired eighty million Americans would be dead."

37 . . . "Former Secretary of State Dean Acheson began attending our meetings, and he was strongly in favor of an air attack."



think the most precious advantage we have on our side in this situation is just this present period of time, short though it must be, in which those missiles are not yet operational, and I don't want to waste any of that time. Point 1: the President of the United States has the primary constitutional obligation to protect the security of the people of the United States. Point 2: the President of the United States has the primary treaty obligation to protect the security of the people of the free world. Point 3: he therefore has the primary obligation to take the only action that can protect the security of  
(38) all these people, which means destroying those missiles without further delay. That is the only comment I want to make.

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: Are you protecting the security of people if they are all going to get killed in the process?

FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE: You can only try. That is the meaning of obligation.

AIR FORCE CHIEF OF STAFF: Mr. President, let me say without any reservations that the Air Force fully supports the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs in the military judgment that an air strike against the missiles is an immediate necessity.

PRESIDENT: What response do you think the Russians will make to an air strike that destroys all their missiles and kills a lot of their men?

(36) AIR FORCE CHIEF: I can assure you, Mr. President, that they won't make it a war. They don't want an all-out war with the United States.

PRESIDENT: Of course they don't want an all-out war with us, any more than we want an all-out war with them. But people can't al-  
(36) ways do what they want. The Russians couldn't accept our direct air attack without making war in reply, any more than we could if

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38 . . . "He (Acheson) said that the President of the United States had the responsibility of the security of the people of the United States and of the whole free world, and that it was his obligation to take the only action which could protect that security, and that meant destroying the missiles."

36 . . . "When the President questioned what the response of the Russians might be, General LeMay assured him there would be no reaction. President Kennedy was skeptical. 'They, no more than we, can let these things go by without doing something. They can't, after all their statements, permit us to take out their missiles, kill a lot of Russians, and then do nothing'."

(54) they attacked us. It may come to the air strike and the ground invasion soon enough, but I'm not convinced we should make that our first step.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: If I may expand somewhat on this point, I appreciate not only the urgent military considerations advanced by the Joint Chiefs, but the political considerations put forth so clearly and forcefully by our distinguished friend the former Secretary of State. All these considerations are grounded on the fact that we don't want to give the communists time to put a substantial number of nuclear missiles in readiness for launching from Cuba because if we do give them such time our physical danger will be greater and our future bargaining power will be weaker. But we have to consider the way we do this, the means as well as the end. I mean, we have to consider the value of our traditions and the history of our nation.

GENERAL: That is exactly what we want to protect in the most effective way.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: But if we start with the air strike and ground invasion, we couldn't get around the fact that this would represent a surprise attack by a very large nation against a very small one. If we made that kind of attack, wouldn't we destroy our moral position at home and our political influence abroad? Wouldn't we be doing the sort of thing we accuse the communists of doing? That's not the way the leader of the world struggle against communism should act. Yesterday during our discussion of the air strike and ground invasion I passed a note to the President. Let me quote it now because it was a spontaneous expression of my feelings about  
(31) this particular point. It said: "I now know how Tojo felt when he was planning Pearl Harbor." I still have that feeling about a surprise air attack, a sneak attack.

ADVISER ON SOVIET AFFAIRS: That's a very important point.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Now the whole advantage of the blockade is that it's a method by which we announce openly and publicly that we're drawing a certain line. We station our ships along it, and we say to them: "There it is, and here are the reasons we set it up. If you try to go through it without our inspection and authorization we will have to restrain you by force. The choice is now yours. If you choose to fight, it is you who are choosing nuclear war. We've given you fair warning."

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54 . . . "That (an air attack) was a gamble he (the President) was not willing to take until he had finally and forcefully exhausted all other possibilities."

31 . . . Verbatim quotation of note.



GENERAL: If you want to give them fair warning all you have to  
(39) do is send a cable to Khrushchev and another to Castro giving them  
twenty-four hours to begin dismantling the bases and removing the  
missiles, else our bombing will begin one minute after the expira-  
tion of the twenty-four hours.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: That's far too abrupt. It sounds too  
much like the ultimatum of a dictator if you begin with that as a  
first step.

GENERAL: But if they won't obey the blockade, or if they obey  
the blockade but won't dismantle the bases and take home the  
missiles before they all become operational, you would agree to  
the air strike and the invasion then?

ATTORNEY GENERAL: I've already said so. The very idea of  
(54-5) the blockade is that it's a preliminary measure, an initial step to try  
to bring enough pressure on them to remove the missiles them-  
(108) selves, with the clear understanding that if they don't do so, we  
will remove them by bombing. If that weren't understood by them,  
or if we weren't prepared to go through with that if and when they  
put us to the test, then the blockade would be a complete fiasco,  
and would do us more harm than good. Is that your understanding  
of the blockade, Mr. President?

(135) PRESIDENT: It is, exactly that. A blockade could never be the  
solution of this problem. The only solution is the removal of the  
missiles. It would be wonderful if we didn't have to go further than

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39 . . . "At various times it was proposed that we send a letter to  
Khrushchev twenty-four hours before the bombardment was  
to begin, that we send a letter to Castro, that leaflets and  
pamphlets listing the targets be dropped over Cuba before  
the attack — all these ideas and more were abandoned for  
military or other reasons."

55 . . . "In his speech he (the President) emphasized that the block-  
ade was the initial step. He had ordered the Pentagon to make  
all the preparations necessary for further military action."

108 . . . "We had to have a commitment by tomorrow that those bases  
would be removed (Robert Kennedy to the Soviet Ambassa-  
dor) . . . He should understand that if they did not remove  
those bases, we would remove them."

135 . . . "We will not prematurely or unnecessarily risk the costs of  
worldwide nuclear war in which even the fruits of victory  
would be ashes in our mouth — but neither will we shrink  
from that risk at any time it must be faced." President's  
speech of October 22, 1962.

a blockade, but it would be disastrous if we were to hesitate to take step 2 when step 1 didn't work.

(37) **ATTORNEY GENERAL:** And let me add, Mr. President, that I have no deep conviction that step 1 by itself is going to work. But it definitely gives us more flexibility, and puts us in a better position when we have to take step 2.

**AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.:** Mr. President, you said it would be disastrous if we were to hesitate to take step 2 if step 1 didn't work. Isn't step 2 disastrous in any case since we've got to assume that if we start a war with the Soviet Union it will be a world war fought with nuclear weapons? What would be left of the world after that?

**PRESIDENT:** That's what's keeping me awake nights. I hope it's (106) keeping the Russians awake, too. They'll all be as dead as we are, along with everyone else. But I don't see how we can accept these missiles without a counter-move from strength. Let me tell you something that happened just yesterday. Gromyko came to see me. The appointment had been made some time before they began to put missiles in Cuba. I debated with myself whether I should take the initiative to tell him we have discovered they are sending Cuba not only conventional and defensive weapons, but nuclear missiles. I finally decided to wait and see whether he would talk about Cuba, and he did.

**SEVERAL VOICES:** He did? What did he say? Does he know we know?

**PRESIDENT:** You couldn't tell how much he really knows. He began by saying he carried an appeal to the United States and to me from Khrushchev and his country to reduce the tensions that exist over Cuba! It almost knocked me off my feet. But at the same time I couldn't help but admire the boldness of this approach. As quietly as I could, and without mentioning nuclear missiles, I told him it was not the United States that was creating tensions, but the Soviet

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37 . . . "I supported McNamara's position . . . not from a deep conviction that it would be successful . . . but a feeling that it had more flexibility and fewer liabilities."

106 . . . "The thought that disturbed him (the President) the most, and that made the prospect of war much more fearful than it would otherwise have been, was the specter of the death of the children of this country and all the world — the young people who had no role, who had no say, who knew nothing even of the confrontation, but whose lives would be snuffed out like everyone else's."



Union. I pointed out that the increasing supply of arms from the Soviet Union to Cuba was having a very bad effect on the American people, including me.

SECRETARY OF STATE: What did he say to that?

PRESIDENT: His reply was that the Soviet Union's main concern was to help Cuba with her elementary problems, to prevent hunger, and so on. As for arms, he said, they had only sent some specialists to help Cubans learn how to handle armaments that were defensive.  
(41) That was the word he used, "defensive", and he repeated it. I took advantage of that to read him aloud my official statement of September 4 in which I said that the most serious consequences would ensue if the Soviet Union placed missiles or offensive weapons in Cuba. This, he assured me, was something that would never be done.

DIRECTOR OF CIA: It's possible his own government is keeping him in the dark.

PRESIDENT: That's possible, but in any case, our problem is the same, and it's this: if we accepted this situation, what would be in store for us in the future? The people at the top over there are lying to us, and they know we know it now, or will discover it very soon, and they're just hoping we won't act.

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: Aren't there ways of acting that don't involve dropping bombs?

PRESIDENT: Up to a point, there are. That's the point of the blockade. We want to give them every chance to think this over while the blockade is in front of them with the clear warning that if they don't stop sending in missiles, and don't remove the ones already delivered, we're prepared to use everything we've got to stop the ships and destroy the missiles.

SECRETARY OF STATE: Mr. President, to add emphasis to your  
(51) point, let me say that all our allies are with us in that course of action. We have put feelers out, and we have a unanimous response.

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41 . . . "To avoid any misunderstanding, he (the President) read aloud his statement of September 4, which pointed out the serious consequences that would arise if the Soviet Union placed missiles or offensive weapons within Cuba."

51 . . . "the Organization of American States unanimously supported the recommendation for a quarantine . . . General de Gaulle said, 'It is exactly what I would have done . . . 'Macmillan made it clear that the U.S. would have his country's support . . . Chancellor Konrad Adenauer of West Germany voiced his support as well."



The Organization of American States will be with us, and will supply some ships to join the blockade. The heads of government of Britain, France and West Germany — let me emphasize, the heads of government, not lesser figures — pledge their full support.

PRESIDENT: You are right. That is a very encouraging sign, and I'm not at all sure we'd get that kind of support if we began with a sneak attack from the air and ground invasion.

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: Frankly, Mr. President, have our allies any real choice in a matter of this kind, except to support us whatever we do? Where else can they go? We've got the nuclear power, and we make the nuclear decisions. They can only hope. If we're wrong, they know we'll all be dead, and if we're right, they don't want to be remembered as having opposed us. And the position of the Soviet Union is the same among its allies.

PRESIDENT: If anything, the Soviet position in that regard is even more certain than ours. We must assume that they'll carry all their allies with them one hundred per cent at every stage. But in one sense, as the Ambassador points out, that doesn't matter, and I agree with him that we ought to be perfectly frank and honest about this. That is, if the United States and the Soviet Union start shooting at each other, and use up all they've got to shoot with, it (106) wouldn't matter in the end what the other countries did or didn't do. They would all be dead, and so would we and the Russians. This is something new in the history of the world, but we can't avoid a decision, and we can't delay — I can't delay — making the decision. I've got to make a statement to the country, which will also be a statement to the Russians, no later than this evening.

(37) GENERAL: You're in a tight place, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: You're in it with me. (*Nervous laughter around the table.*) Gentlemen, I want to thank everyone here for sharing with me whatever was in his mind and heart about this matter, maybe the most important matter any group of men ever faced. Now I have to put my statement into final form for broadcast this evening. We'll meet tomorrow morning at ten o'clock. (*End of scene.*)

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106 . . . "The thought that disturbed him (the President) the most, and that made the prospect of war much more fearful than it would otherwise have been, was the specter of the death of the children of this country and all the world — the young people who had no role, who had no say, who knew nothing even of

*Scene 2. Lois' apartment the evening of the same day. Lois and Steve are coming into the living room-dining room with brown paper bags. The apartment is inexpensively furnished, yet with a variety of cultural objects — a wall hanging, books, record player, peasant pottery, an original painting, a sculptured figure. To one side there is a smallish dining table with candlesticks. Facing the audience is a couch with a large coffee table in front of it. One door leads to the kitchen, another to the bed room. Steve is carrying a large, flat pizza carton. They put the bags on the dining table.)*

STEVE: Let's put the pizza in the oven while we have some wine and nuts. *(Goes into kitchen with the pizza.)*

LOIS *(as she takes out of the bags a straw-covered bottle of chianti, salted nuts, celery, carrots)*: Do you eat nuts first?

STEVE *(from the kitchen)*: You know, those salted nuts. They're like you without perfume — irresistible.

LOIS: Still harping on the perfume.

STEVE *(returning)*: Well, I notice you didn't wear it again. *(Puts his arms around her from behind and gives her a hug. She turns around, and they kiss.)*

LOIS: Why waste bullets on a dead wolf? Remember?

STEVE: Don't waste time being so witty. Bring over the celery and carrots. *(Steve sets two wine glasses, the salted nuts and the bottle of wine on the coffee table. Lois brings paper plates and napkins, celery and carrots to the couch, and sits down. Steve is already seated, pouring wine. Holds up his glass.)* Here's to the conspiracy.

LOIS: What conspiracy?

STEVE: The conspiracy to educate me. *(Drinks and takes a stalk of celery.)* I hope you brought the latest developments.

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the confrontation, but whose lives would be snuffed out like everyone else's."

37 . . . "Gen. Shoup, Commandant of the Marine Corps, summed up everyone's feelings: 'You are in a pretty bad fix, Mr. President.' The President answered quickly, 'You are in it with me.' Everyone laughed . . . "



LOIS: I brought a development that hasn't even developed yet.

STEVE: What?

LOIS: You know, I might lose my job for this. I brought an advance copy of the speech the President is going to make to the nation.

STEVE: About Cuba?

LOIS: Yes.

STEVE: What is he going to do? What does he say in the speech?

LOIS: I'll give it to you. You can read it. But eat your pizza first. *(She goes to the kitchen, returns with the pizza, and serves each of them a portion.)*

STEVE: Does he threaten war?

LOIS: I haven't had a chance to read it yet myself.

STEVE: Do you believe in God?

LOIS: Yes. Don't you?

STEVE: So you believe God made the world?

LOIS: Of course. Who else?

STEVE: No one else but God could make the world?

LOIS: No one else. But what are you getting at?

STEVE: And that means whoever made the world must be God.

LOIS: I guess so. But I still don't see what you're getting at.

STEVE: And God could destroy the world, no one else but God?

LOIS: Why yes, that's what I was taught.

STEVE: Then anyone who could destroy the world must be God?

LOIS: You mean . . .

STEVE: Yes. Man has become God. Not man, a few men. The President, the Pentagon, the Executive branch of the United States government.

LOIS: You mean it must be their fault if there's a war, and the world is destroyed? Aren't you forgetting the communists in Russia and Cuba?

STEVE: No, I'm not forgetting them. It's the same on their side, when it comes to deciding about war. A few men. The head of the Party, the Politbureau. We've gone back to polytheism. That's the trouble with having more than one god. The world can get destroyed that much quicker.



LOIS: How can you compare their government with ours? We've got a democracy. Aren't they a dictatorship? In our government we haven't got just one man who can do anything, like God on earth. We've got a Constitution that divides the powers. Don't you think that means anything?

STEVE: It could mean something, if we followed it. But why don't you use that logical brain of yours, and ask yourself if it's being followed? What does the Constitution say about war? It says Congress alone has the power to decide if we are to go to war. Congress, not the Executive. Why? Because Congress is an open body, with representatives from every section of the country. They're closer to the people, and they have to stand up and be counted. But who's making this decision about war right now? Not Congress, but the President, and a few advisers he himself appointed. And how is it being made? Not openly, but behind closed doors, behind the backs of the people and the Congress. That's a hell of a way for the world to end.

LOIS: Do you really think they would end the world?

STEVE: They wouldn't. The missiles and the bombs would. All they would do is hurry up and push the buttons before the other side did. Give me that speech, will you please? Let me at least read what they say before they go ahead and do it.

LOIS (*going to her bag to fetch the copy of the speech*): You sure make it sound awful.

(131-9) STEVE: It is awful, damn it. This may be the last wine I drink on earth, and I don't believe in heaven. (*He gulps the wine in his glass as Lois hands him the copy, and he starts to read aloud.*) "Good evening, my fellow citizens. This Government, as promised, has maintained the closest surveillance of the Soviet military build-up on the island of Cuba. Within the past week unmistakable evidence has established the fact that a series of offensive missile sites is now in preparation on that imprisoned island . . . " Offensive missile sites? I suppose our missile sites in Turkey, Italy and the other countries are purely defensive. The communists are so ignorant that they just don't know we're the cops and they're the robbers. (*Reads.*) "The purpose of these bases can be none other than to provide a nuclear strike capability against the Western Hemisphere . . . " In other words, it's all right for us to have a nuclear strike capability against the Eastern Hemisphere, but they can't have a nuclear strike capability against the Western Hemisphere. Nuclear strike capability is

only for the good gods. The communists are the bad gods. We don't have to go any further, Lois. This world is already destroyed. Let's get a ticket to another planet.

LOIS: Stop being so clever. What else does he say?

STEVE (*reading*): "Upon receiving the first preliminary hard information of this nature last Tuesday morning at 9 a.m., I directed that our surveillance be stepped up. And having now confirmed and completed our evaluation of the evidence and our decision on a course of action, this Government feels obliged to report this new crisis to you in fullest detail . . . " OK, let's have the details. (*Pours some wine in his glass, takes a sip, and resumes reading.*) "The characteristics of these new missile sites indicate two distinct types of installations. Several of them include medium-range ballistic missiles capable of carrying a nuclear warhead for a distance of more than 1,000 nautical miles. Each of these missiles, in short, is capable of striking Washington, D.C., the Panama Canal, Cape Canaveral, Mexico City, or any other city in the southeastern part of the United States, in Central America or in the Caribbean area . . . " Well, isn't that natural, since our missiles in Turkey are capable of striking Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev, and the whole southern part of the Soviet Union in the area of the Black Sea and the Caspian? No, it's not natural at all, because we're the good gods, and when we have missiles, they are only defensive, whereas the communists are the bad gods, so that their missiles can only be offensive. It's a double standard from beginning to end. The philosophy of this is as clear as crystal, as absurd as a square circle and as deadly as an atom bomb. It's a recipe for the end of the world. I feel faint. Let me eat some more before the bombs drop. Moscow may be wiped out already. (*Hands Lois the speech.*) Here, you read what comes next. (*Takes some food, and eats.*)

LOIS: "Additional sites not yet completed appear to be designed for intermediate-range ballistic missiles capable of travelling more than twice as far — and thus capable of striking most of the major cities in the Western Hemisphere, ranging as far north as Hudson Bay, Canada, and as far south as Lima, Peru. In addition, jet bombers, capable of carrying nuclear weapons, are now being uncrated and assembled in Cuba, while the necessary air bases are being prepared . . . " (*Steve breaks in.*)

STEVE: My God! This would be a joke if it weren't so serious. We have far more foreign bases than they have, much closer to them than theirs are to us. Our jet bombers have long ago been uncrated and assembled on bases all over the world. Our missiles can hit any point on the surface of the earth. On what basis are we making all



these complaints and threats? Don't the Russians have the right to do a little of what we're doing? What else does he say on that?

LOIS (*reading*): "This urgent transformation of Cuba into an important strategic base — by the presence of these large, long-range and clearly offensive weapons of sudden mass destruction . . . "

(*Steve breaks in.*)

STEVE: There we go again with the double standard. You'd think our nuclear missiles were all small, short-range and clearly defensive weapons of only gradual, restricted destruction. You'd think our nuclear weapons didn't transform Turkey into an important strategic base for us. Here, you eat and I'll read. (*Takes the speech.*) "constitutes an explicit threat to the peace and security of all the Americas . . . " Our missiles in Turkey of course don't threaten anyone. They're doves of peace to all the Soviets. "in flagrant and deliberate defiance of . . . " (*Looks up, as he turns page.*) I wonder what laws or principles the Soviet weapons are deliberately defying. (*Resumes reading.*) "the Rio Pact of 1947 . . . " But why should the Soviets be bound by the Rio Pact? They didn't take part in it, and weren't even invited. What else are they disobeying? (*Resumes reading.*) "the traditions of this nation and Hemisphere . . . " How ridiculous can you get? Why should Russia or Cuba be bound by the traditions of the United States? The United States is not bound by the traditions of Russia or Cuba. What further are they guilty of disobeying? (*Resumes reading.*) "the Joint Resolution of the 87th Congress . . . " This takes the cake. Suppose they complained that we were disobeying a Joint Resolution of the Soviet Government and Communist Party? We'd laugh in their faces and tell them where they could go. Is there more? Yes. (*Resumes reading.*) "the Charter of the United Nations . . . " The Charter of the United Nations? If that forbids Soviet missiles in Cuba, it must equally have forbidden American missiles in Turkey! And there's still more. (*Resumes reading.*) "and my own public warnings to the Soviets on September 4 and 13 . . . " My God! He saved the real shockaroo for last. The Soviet Union must obey the orders of the President of the United States! He's talking as if we own the earth. Won't the American people see through this?

LOIS: No. I wouldn't see through it unless you were here. What else does he say?

STEVE (*reading*): "This action also contradicts the repeated assurances of Soviet spokesmen, both publicly and privately delivered, that the arms build-up in Cuba would retain its original defensive character . . . " Here's the word game again, as if weapons in themselves were offensive or defensive. Any weapon is offensive if it's



used offensively, just as any weapon is defensive if it's used in self-defense. The same missile can be used for one purpose or the other. It doesn't depend on the missile. If it did, we'd be the most offensive nation on earth, since we've got the most missiles. Right?

LOIS: That's right. Go ahead.

STEVE: "and that the Soviet Union had no need or desire to station strategic missiles on the territory of any other nation." Well, maybe they changed their minds since then. They don't have to get our permission. We didn't get their permission before we stationed our strategic missiles in Turkey, Italy or anywhere else.

LOIS: No, I guess we didn't. What is all this leading up to?

STEVE: I hate to think, but let's follow the trail. (*Resumes reading.*) "Neither the United States of America nor the world community of nations can tolerate deliberate deception and offensive threats on the part of any nation, large or small . . ." Could he really be serious? Deliberate deception is the rule in military matters. That's the meaning of military secrets. We do that all the time, and every other nation does. Everyone expects it. As for threats, isn't this whole speech a threat? If this is our reason for starting the war that destroys the world, it will be the biggest joke in all history.

LOIS: The joke to end all jokes. I'm beginning to think like you, and it scares me. Come to the part where he says what he's going to do. Does he talk about war?

STEVE (*running his finger down the lines*): Here: "The 1930's taught us a clear lesson: Aggressive conduct, if allowed to grow unchecked and unchallenged, ultimately leads to war . . ." But damn it, if it's aggressive conduct to set up missile bases close to other countries, we're the original aggressor. (*Pauses a moment as he studies the text.*) You wouldn't believe what he goes on to say.

LOIS: What?

STEVE (*reading*): "This nation is opposed to war. We are also true to our word. Our unswerving objective, therefore, must be to prevent the use of these missiles against this or any other country and to secure their withdrawal or elimination from the Western Hemisphere . . ."

LOIS (*interrupting quickly*): If we're opposed to war, then we won't threaten war to get rid of the missiles.

STEVE: Wait. He goes on: "But now, further action is required. We will not prematurely or unnecessarily risk the costs of worldwide nuclear war in which event the fruits of victory would be ashes in our mouth —but neither will we shrink from that risk at

any time it must be faced." Worldwide nuclear war? The fruits of victory would certainly be ashes in our mouth for the simple reason that everything would be ashes, including our mouth.

LOIS: So he won't end the world prematurely or unnecessarily. That doesn't give me much comfort. Does he say what he's going to do right now?

STEVE: Let's see. Yes, he's got a list of things, one to seven. The seven commandments of one of the gods who can end the world.

LOIS: Come on, there's no time for philosophy. What are they?

STEVE (*reading*): "First: To halt this offensive build-up, a strict quarantine . . . " Quarantine? What is he talking about? (*Resumes reading.*) "on all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba is being initiated . . . " Ah-ha! He means a blockade, an armed blockade of Cuba. (*Resumes reading.*) "All ships of any kind bound for Cuba from whatever nation or port . . . " From whatever nation or port? God is speaking to the whole world. (*Resumes reading.*) "will, if found to contain cargoes of offensive weapons . . . " Guess who will decide whether they're offensive. (*Resumes reading.*) "be turned back. This quarantine will be extended, if needed, to other types of cargo and carriers . . . " God is all-powerful. (*Resumes reading.*) "We are not at this time, however, denying the necessities of life as the Soviets attempted to do in their Berlin blockade of 1948 . . . " Our god is merciful. He'll let the people have bread and water for a while, but he'll blow them to bits if they don't obey.

LOIS: Let's get on to the other six things. Maybe we can find out how long we have to live.

STEVE (*reading*): "I have directed the continued and increased close surveillance of Cuba and its military build-up. The Foreign Ministers of the Organization of American States . . . " (*Lois interrupts.*)

LOIS: What kind of an organization is that?

STEVE: It's a regional organization of the Latin American countries under the leadership of the Anglo-Saxon gods, something like a conservative political club, for capitalists only. Of course, they wouldn't let Cuba show her face in the club after she became communist.

LOIS: Well, what does he say about this organization?

STEVE: He says it decided Cuba can't have any secret weapons. (*Reads.*) "in their communique of October 3 rejected secrecy on such matters in this hemisphere."



LOIS: First they kick Cuba out, and then they try to tell her what secrets she can have?

STEVE: You're catching on.

LOIS: Is Cuba a member of the United Nations?

STEVE: Of course.

LOIS: Then she ought to complain. All the members are supposed to have equal rights, aren't they?

STEVE: Of course. And she will complain, but I don't know how much good it will do her. The United Nations hasn't got any authority. It's only got principles, like a god who can't punish.

LOIS: OK, let's get back to the real god.

STEVE: You asked for it. (*Reads.*) "Should these offensive military preparations continue, thus increasing the threat to the hemisphere, further action will be justified. I have directed the Armed Forces to prepare for any eventualities; and I trust that in the interests of both the Cuban people and the Soviet technicians at the sites, the hazards to all concerned of continuing this threat will be recognized . . . " Notice the equality of threats. They threaten to build missile sites in their own country, which is legal, and we threaten to invade their air space and bomb them, which is illegal.

LOIS: I get it. What's the next thing?

STEVE (*reading*): "Third, It shall be the policy of this nation to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union. Fourth, As a necessary military precaution I have reinforced our base at Guantanamo . . . " (*Lois breaks in.*)

LOIS: Where is that?

STEVE: Believe it or not, that's inside Cuba.

LOIS: Inside Cuba? How come they let us keep a naval base in their country?

STEVE: Originally, we took it by force, during the Spanish-American War. After the war, when Cuba was independent of Spain, we made a deal with the Cuban government whereby we lease it from them for some measly little rental fee. We were the capitalist big brother, and they were the capitalist poor relation, and there was nothing they could do about it.

LOIS: But now we're no longer friends. Can't they tell us to leave?

STEVE: They can tell us, but we won't go.



LOIS: You mean we can kick them out of the Organization of American States, but they can't kick us out of their own country?

STEVE: That's the way it is when you're god. You give commands unto the little ones: Thou shalt have no other gods but me. Thou shalt not commit missilry.

LOIS: This is looking worse and worse. What's number five?

STEVE (*reading*): "Fifth. We are calling tonight for an immediate meeting of the Organ of Consultation under the Organization of American States, to consider this threat to hemispheric security, and to invoke articles six and eight of the Rio Treaty in support of all necessary action . . . ." (*Lois interrupts.*)

LOIS: Skip all that about the Organization of American States. It's too ridiculous. If Cuba is an independent country we have absolutely no right to tell her she must do anything she doesn't want to do. We're treating her like a child.

STEVE: Aren't we all god's children?

LOIS: Let's finish this. What's six and seven?

STEVE (*reading*): "Sixth. Under the Charter of the United Nations, we are asking tonight that an emergency meeting of the Security Council be convoked without delay . . . ." (*Lois breaks in.*)

LOIS: We're asking for an emergency meeting of the United Nations? Why do we need the United Nations?

STEVE: He tells you right here (*reading*): "to take action against this latest Soviet threat to world peace. Our resolution will call for the prompt dismantling and withdrawal of all offensive weapons in Cuba, under the supervision of United Nations observers, before the quarantine can be lifted."

LOIS: But how about all our offensive weapons in Turkey and Italy? Aren't they a threat to world peace?

STEVE: Aren't you forgetting that we are the good gods whose weapons are never offensive, and therefore no threat to world peace?

LOIS: Yes. It's just hard to get used to. I wonder what seven could be, after all this.

STEVE: The final commandment. Here it is. (*Reads.*) "Seventh, and finally, I call upon Chairman Khrushchev to halt and eliminate this clandestine, reckless and provocative threat to world peace and to stable relations between our two nations. I call upon him further to abandon this course of world domination, and to join in an historic effort to end the perilous arms race and trans-

form the history of man. He has an opportunity now to move the world back from the abyss of destruction — by returning to his government's own words that it had no need to station missiles outside its own territory, and withdrawing these weapons from Cuba — by refraining from any action which will widen or deepen the present crisis — and then by participating in a search for peaceful and permanent solutions. This nation is prepared to present its case against the Soviet threat to peace, and our own proposals for a peaceful world, at any time and in any forum, in the Organization of American States . . . " (*Lois interrupts.*)

LOIS: The Organization of American States? I can't take any more of this. It's too much.

STEVE: You've got to hear the last words, the very end.

LOIS: All right. Go on.

STEVE (*reading*): "Our goal is not the victory of might, but the vindication of right — not peace at the expense of freedom, but both peace and freedom, here in this hemisphere, and, we hope, around the world. God willing, that goal will be achieved." That's it.

LOIS: My God! I never knew it could be so bad. How could the Russians and Cubans accept all that? What will the Russians do? Steve, I'm frightened. Let's go to bed while we're still alive.

STEVE: Amen. (*End of scene.*)

ACT III

*Scene 1. Cabinet Room, several days later. The same persons are standing and sitting around the table, conversing and scrutinizing documents, all with the appearance of being under great pressure and strain. As the President comes in, all standing take their seats, and all give him their undivided attention.*

PRESIDENT: Gentlemen, let me sum up the situation as it now stands. As you know, our armed forces have been on alert throughout the world for several days. By the time I spoke to the nation,  
(52) the navy had deployed a hundred and eighty ships into the Carib-  
(52) bean. The Strategic Air Command has been dispersed to civilian landing fields around the country to lessen its vulnerability to attack. Our B-52 bomber force has been ordered into the air fully loaded with atomic weapons. As one comes down to land, another immediately takes its place in the air. Our base at Guantanamo Bay has been strengthened. The Pentagon's report to me lists the following items in readiness for the invasion of Cuba if the Russians don't accept our terms: 250,000 men, 2,000 air sorties  
(55) against the various targets in Cuba, 90,000 Marines and Airborne in the invasion force. We must expect to suffer at least 25,000 combat casualties in the initial strikes.

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: What about the wider theatre?

PRESIDENT: Large contingents of other troops are moving rapidly into the southeastern part of the coastal states. Among the

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52 . . . "The Navy deployed 180 ships into the Caribbean . . . The B-52 bomber force was ordered into the air fully loaded with atomic weapons. As one came down to land, another immediately took its place in the air."

52 . . . "The Strategic Air Command was dispersed to civilian landing fields around the country, to lessen its vulnerability in case of attack."

55 . . . All numbers are as given.



- (58) first Russian reactions may be a counter-blockade of Berlin, and I have ordered that all military measures be placed in readiness in  
 (59) Europe to deal with it. If the Russians' response makes invasion necessary we want to make sure we won't have to waste any time getting ready.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE: Mr. President, I think the most probable form that a Soviet military reaction would take in the very near future would be the shooting down of one of our U-2 planes over Cuba, since we have so greatly increased our use of them for surveillance. Perhaps this is the time and place to pin down exactly what we do if and when that happens.

- PRESIDENT: As you know, I have been discussing that with a number of persons. The consensus, with which I agree, is that as soon as they shoot down a single U-2, we should select a single surface-to-surface missile site for destruction. After I am informed  
 (58) of their action, and give my specific permission, that particular site should be bombed by our planes. And if this leads to a general military response from the communists then of course we have no alternative but to widen our own military attack, and that would be general war. But I want to avoid that if it is humanly possible, to do so.

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: Have there been any further diplomatic contacts, Mr. President?

- PRESIDENT: Yes. I sent a personal letter to Khrushchev asking him to observe the quarantine that has been legally established by  
 (60) vote of the Organization of American States. I emphasized that the

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58 . . . "The President ordered preparations to proceed for a possible blockade of Berlin."

59 . . . " 'Now the only thing I say once again is that if the Russians' response makes a military action or invasion inevitable, I want to be able to feel that we will not have to waste any days having to get ready,' he (the President) said."

58 . . . "We also discussed in detail what would be done if a U-2 plane were to be shot down, agreeing that — after obtaining specific permission from the President — bomber and fighter planes would destroy a surface-to-surface missile site."

60 . . . "The President composed a letter to Khrushchev, asking him to observe the quarantine legally established by a vote of the OAS, making it clear that the U.S. did not wish to fire on any ships of the S.U., adding, 'I am concerned that we both show prudence, and do nothing to allow events to make the situation more difficult to control than it is.'"

United States does not wish to fire on any ships of the Soviet Union, and I strongly urged that we both show prudence, and do nothing to allow events to make the situation more difficult to control than it is. We know that eight or ten Soviet ships were on their way to Cuba when we announced the quarantine. And we know that some of them slowed down or stopped in their course, as if waiting for further instructions from home before approaching our line. And now we have some new reactions from the other side. Two new letters from Khrushchev have arrived.

SEVERAL VOICES (*excitedly*): They have? What does he say? What's he going to do? This is it.

PRESIDENT: I still don't know what he's going to do, but I can tell you what he says. Our problem is to put the letters all together and then try to figure out what he'll do. You remember the earliest letter he sent, after the first announcement of our quarantine. That  
(80) was the one in which he called it "outright banditry", and he said flatly that it was not going to be observed by the Soviet Union. He  
(80) claimed it was a threat, and that it represented "the folly of degenerate imperialism."

GENERAL: The usual clichés.

PRESIDENT: But ominous in the context. He specified that the captains of Soviet ships would never be instructed to obey American orders, and that if we made any effort to interfere with Soviet vessels, the Soviet government would be forced to protect the rights of Soviet ships on the high seas, and for this purpose, he said, the Soviet Union has all that is necessary. He warned us that we were  
(80) pushing mankind towards what he called "the abyss of a world missile-nuclear war," but there were no proposals from his side. By contrast, the first of the new letters begins to make certain proposals.

SEVERAL VOICES: Is he changing his line? Does he want to make a deal? Good!

PRESIDENT: No, I don't think he's changing his line, but he does have a deal in mind, in the end. A lot of this letter is quite emotional, sincere enough in its own way, about the death, destruction and anarchy that nuclear war would bring to all mankind. He says again and again that this must be avoided. In one place he puts it this way.  
(87) (*President reads from sheets.*) "If indeed war should break out, then it would not be in our power to stop it, for such is the logic

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80 . . . The quotations are verbatim.

87 . . . The quotations are verbatim.



of war. I have participated in two wars, and know that war ends when it has rolled through cities and villages, everywhere sowing death and destruction." Speaking of the missiles, he says they are for defensive purposes only, and would never be used to attack the United States. His exact words are (*reads*): "You can be calm in this regard; we are of sound mind and understand perfectly well that if we attack you, you will respond the same way. But you too will receive the same that you hurl against us. And I think that you also understand this . . . " Then he goes on, speaking of his own country, "This indicates that we are normal people, that we correctly understand and correctly evaluate the situation. Consequently, how can we permit the incorrect actions that you ascribe to us? Only lunatics or suicides, who themselves want to perish and to destroy the whole world before they die, could do this." Then he describes what he wants. (*Reads.*) "We want something quite different . . . not to destroy your country . . . but despite our ideological differences to compete peacefully, not by military means."

GENERAL: That's the old propaganda line. Does he say anything new about the blockade?

PRESIDENT: Yes. He has a proposition, and he leads up to it by claiming that there's no reason for us to interfere with any of the ships now bound for Cuba, because they contain no weapons. He (88) says that all the intended weapons are already within Cuba. This is of course the first time he has acknowledged the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba. He then brings up the Bay of Pigs, reminding me I told him in Vienna that that invasion was a mistake. He says he appreciated such candor, and that he showed the same kind of courage in acknowledging what he refers to as "those mistakes which have been committed during the history of our state, and I not only acknowledged but sharply condemned them." Actually, as I told Khrushchev in Vienna, those were the mistakes of Stalin, but he didn't admit any of his own.

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: Maybe you were too hard on yourself, Mr. President. When you come right down to it, the Bay of Pigs wasn't your mistake either. (*Everyone laughs except the Director of the CIA.*)

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88 . . . "He then explained why they carried no missiles: all the shipments of weapons were already within Cuba. That was the first time he had acknowledged the presence of missiles within Cuba."



PRESIDENT: About the missiles, he says the cause of sending  
(88) them to Cuba was that our government was interested in over-  
throwing the Cuban government, as our government tried to over-  
throw the Soviet government after the revolution in Russia. Then  
he comes to his first proposal, in these words (*reads*): "If assur-  
ances were given that the President of the United States would not  
participate in an attack on Cuba, and the blockade were lifted,  
(89) then the question of removal or destruction of the missile sites in  
Cuba would be an entirely different question." Then he spells it  
out: He will send no more weapons to Cuba, and will withdraw or  
destroy the missiles within Cuba, and we are to reciprocate by  
withdrawing the blockade and pledging not to invade Cuba.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE: That's just about what we wanted.  
Do you mean to say this thing is working?

PRESIDENT: Wait, there's more coming. Don't forget there's a  
second new letter.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE: Does he go back on his offer?

PRESIDENT: No. But he adds a condition. I'll read it to you. It's  
quite brief. (*Reads.*) "We will remove our missiles from Cuba, you  
(94) will remove yours from Turkey . . . The Soviet Union will pledge  
not to invade or interfere with the internal affairs of Turkey; the  
U.S. to make the same pledge regarding Cuba."

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: That's not bad.

PRESIDENT: It may not be bad in itself, and actually it would not  
(94) involve any loss to us or to Nato, because those missiles in Turkey  
are in fact obsolete. The Polaris submarines we now have in the  
Mediterranean are far more effective. That's the reason I ordered  
the removal of those Turkish missiles some time ago.

SECRETARY OF STATE: Mr. President, I began negotiations with  
(94) the Turks at that time, and I've brought it up with them on several

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88 . . . "the U.S. was interested in overthrowing the Cuban government,  
as the U.S. had actually attempted to overthrow the Communist  
government in the S.U. after their revolution."  
89 . . . Verbatim.  
94 . . . Verbatim.  
94 . . . "The President had asked the State Department to reach an agree-  
ment with Turkey for the withdrawal of Jupiter missiles . . . They  
were clearly obsolete, and our Polaris submarines in the Mediter-  
ranean would give Turkey far greater protection. At the President's  
insistence, Rusk had raised the question . . . The Turks objected,  
and the matter was permitted to drop."

occasions since then. It seems very hard for them to understand, and I thought they might need a little more time to think it over and accept the new situation.

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: Well, I think they can accept it now.

PRESIDENT: That's not the point now.

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: I don't follow you, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: Little as I value those missiles, and much as I wish  
(95) they had been removed when I first ordered it, I can't agree to it now because I would be acting under threat from the Russians.

GENERAL: That's right. We can't let them threaten us and get away with it.

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: Aren't we threatening them, too? Why not look upon it that they're asking for equal rights, for reciprocity, especially when we understand among ourselves that what they're asking for is no longer of any value to us? Shouldn't we meet them half way, to prevent the mutual extermination that both sides otherwise expect?

GENERAL: You don't meet blackmail half way.

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: Even mutual blackmail? Couldn't they say we were blackmailing them when we put our missiles in Turkey? We didn't ask their approval.

GENERAL: But they lied to us.

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: Couldn't they say we lied to them? The spy flights over their country that we lied about were made from those same Turkish bases, and the invasion we lied about was the invasion of Cuba.

DIRECTOR OF THE CIA: May I, Mr. President — (*President interrupts.*)

PRESIDENT: No, John, I don't want to rake over the Bay of Pigs. There isn't time for it now, and anyway, you know my opinion on that. What we face now is a new situation about which Khrushchev has sent me two new letters. I can't delay my reply, and I can't accept the kind of threat laid down in his second letter. On that I have to differ again with the Ambassador to the United Nations. Several drafts of my reply to Khrushchev have been formulated, and I think the one we've arrived at now puts what we have to say in the right way. Let me give you the wording. (*Reads.*) "Dear Mr. Chair-

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95 . . . "He (the President) obviously did not wish to order the withdrawal of the missiles under threat from the Soviet Union."



man: I have read your letter of October 26 . . . " (that's the first of the new ones) "with great care, and welcome the statement of your desire to seek a prompt solution to the problem. The first thing that needs to be done, however, is for work to cease on offensive missile bases in Cuba, and for all weapons systems in Cuba capable of offensive use to be rendered inoperable, under effective United Nations arrangements." Paragraph. "Assuming this is done promptly, I have given my representatives in New York instructions that will permit them to work out this weekend — in cooperation with the Acting Secretary General and your representative — an arrangement for a permanent solution to the Cuban problem along the lines suggested in your letter of October 26 . . . "You'll notice I'm sticking to the first of the new letters. (*Resumes reading.*) "As I read your letter, the key elements of your proposals — which seem generally acceptable as I understand them — are as follows: 1) You would agree to remove these weapons systems from Cuba under appropriate United Nations observation and supervision; and undertake, with suitable safeguards, to halt the further introduction of such weapons systems into Cuba. 2) We on our part would agree — upon the establishment of adequate arrangements through the United Nations — a) to remove promptly the quarantine measure now in effect, and b) to give assurances against an invasion of Cuba."

GENERAL: An excellent statement, Mr. President. They certainly ought to be satisfied with that. They keep their missiles out of Cuba, and we promise not to invade.

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: You ignore his proposal about the missile bases in Turkey?

PRESIDENT: I don't ignore it, but I don't discuss it because I can't accept it. It can't be a part of this settlement. I refer to it indirectly at the close, where I say that the effect of the above settlement on easing world tensions "would be to enable us to work toward a more general arrangement regarding 'other armaments' " (that's the reference) "as proposed in your second letter, which you made public." And I go on to say: "But the first ingredient, let me emphasize, is the cessation of work on missile sites in Cuba and measures to render such weapons inoperable, under effective international guarantees. The continuation of this threat, or a prolonging of this discussion concerning Cuba by linking these problems to the broader questions of European and world security would surely lead to an intensification of the Cuban crisis and a grave risk to the peace of the world. For this reason I hope we can



quickly agree along the lines outlined in this letter and in your letter of October 26. John F. Kennedy."

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: Mr. President, as I understand your position, you can't accept their proposal because you consider it a threat. (*General breaks in.*)

GENERAL: For God's sake, can't you recognize a threat to your country?

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: I might ask you if you can recognize a threat to mankind? But if you will allow me, I was about to say something to the President. Mr. President, if the Russian proposal is a threat, might it not be a justified threat?

GENERAL: A communist threat is a justified threat? I never thought I'd hear anything like that in this room.

PRESIDENT: Wait a minute, now. We're all in this room by my invitation, and we're all here to listen to everything that any one of us has to say. And no one's patriotism is to be questioned, no matter how much we may disagree with what he says. Let that be understood by everyone here. The Ambassador raises a point that is entirely proper and necessary. I can only reply to it by saying that I do not consider this threat to be justified because if we were to give in to the blackmail on this occasion we would have no future as a sovereign nation in dealing with the communists.

(95) Even though I recognize that to reasonable people a trade of this kind might look like a very fair suggestion, I cannot agree to it in these circumstances. We would be giving in to a threat. We would be giving them the whip hand over us.

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: I think we'd only be giving them equality. But whatever you want to call it, will we have any future as a nation, or will anyone have any future at all, if we choose the path of war when both sides have nuclear weapons? Even before they made this offer you may recall that in our earlier discussions I suggested that we ought to propose a deal of that kind to them. We don't really need the missiles in Turkey and Italy, and for that matter we don't really need the Guantanamo base. These things are certainly not worth a nuclear holocaust that consumes us all.

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95 . . . "he (the President) did not want to involve the U.S. and mankind in a catastrophic war over missile sites in Turkey that were antiquated and useless. He pointed out . . . that to reasonable people, a trade of this kind might look like a very fair suggestion, that our position had become extremely vulnerable, and that it was our own fault."

PRESIDENT: We are all aware of the possible consequences, and we've said so a number of times in our discussions. But that doesn't change the obligations we have as a sovereign power and as leader  
 (106) of the free world. I detest war as much as anyone on this earth. And I detest it more for the reason that it can kill so many other people than simply for the reason that it can kill me. But the time hasn't yet come when governments that want to remain free can just give up the power to make war.

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: But isn't fighting with the weapons of today something entirely new, something qualitatively different? Should it really be called war if it can be fought with nuclear missiles that can incinerate the human race and sterilize the planet? Do we really have a right to kill off the whole human future, as well as ourselves? Don't we need a new attitude when we're dealing with these consequences?

PRESIDENT: Maybe we do, but we haven't got it. I wish we had. All we've got are the old responsibilities and the old enemies. Only the weapons are new, and our enemies have them as well as we. What else can we do? Where can we look for guidance? The churches recognize war, and they send chaplains to help us. The universities have any number of courses in ethics, political science and history, but the professors haven't come up with any substitute for war. The educational system teaches the nation that communism is our greatest enemy, and religion teaches the nation that it's our sacred duty to fight against communism. Because war can now destroy the world I can't  
 (67) see that the attitude of the church has changed, or the attitude of the school, or the attitude of the people, or the attitude of Congress, for that matter. How could I be expected to have a different attitude?

AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N.: Isn't that fatalism, Mr. President?

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106 . . . "The thought that disturbed him (the President) the most, and that made the prospect of war much more fearful than it would otherwise have been, was the specter of the death of the children of this country and all the world — the young people who had no role, who had no say, who knew nothing even of the confrontation, but whose lives would be snuffed out like everyone else's."

67 . . . " 'I just don't think there was any choice,' I said, 'and not only that, if you hadn't acted, you would have been impeached.' The President thought for a moment, and said, 'That's what I think — I would have been impeached'."



PRESIDENT: I think it's reality, the reality that faces us, and that we're a part of. Not that I want to blame anyone else for my decision. I think it's the only one I have the right to make.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Mr. President, as you know, some of our discussions of this point have led to raising the specific ethical question: What, if any, circumstance or justification gives this government or any government the moral right to bring its people and possibly all people under the shadow of nuclear destruction? Of course, no one here could come up with a formula on the spur of the moment. We're not exactly specialists on that. But what is more surprising is that when I called on my staff for some research into this, they could only report that apparently no one has worked out any theory of it.

PRESIDENT: Well, we haven't time to wait for the theory. We're confronted with too many facts, and I'm going to ask the Attorney General (I've consulted with the Secretary of State about this, and he agrees with me) to have a conference today, as my personal representative, with the Soviet Ambassador, to impress upon him the meaning of my reply to Khrushchev, and the strength of our determination to carry out our policy, so there will be no possible doubt in their minds about our intentions.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Of course I'll be glad to do that, Mr. President. I'll arrange it right after this meeting.

PRESIDENT: And give me a ring as soon as it's over. He's got to understand that we mean what we say, and I'll need to know his reaction right away.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: I understand. I'll do that.

PRESIDENT: Thank you, gentlemen. We'll meet again at our usual time. *(End scene.)*

128 . . . Note by Theodore Sorenson at the end of Robert Kennedy's memoir: "It was Senator Kennedy's intention to add a discussion of the basic ethical question involved: what, if any, circumstance or justification gives this government or any government the right to bring its people and possibly all people under the shadow of nuclear destruction? He wrote this book in the summer and fall of 1967 on the basis of his personal diaries and recollections, but never had an opportunity to re-write or complete it."

106 . . . "he (the President) and Secretary Rusk decided that I should visit with Ambassador Dobrynin, and personally convey the President's great concern."



*Scene 2. Later the same day. Office of the Attorney General. He is seated behind his desk, going over papers. The intercom buzzes.*

VOICE ON THE INTERCOM: The Soviet Ambassador is here, sir.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Good. Ask him to come in. (*Attorney General rises from his seat as a large, half bald, middle aged man wearing glasses enters. They shake hands.*) Thank you for coming, Mr. Ambassador. Please sit down, and I'll get right to the point.

AMBASSADOR: Thank you. I'm glad to see you again, and I'm especially glad to come as I understand from your message that the President has requested our meeting.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes. He had a very serious reason for doing so, and I expect it is not a surprise to you. (*Pauses, but Ambassador says nothing.*) First, we know that work is not only going forward on the missile sites in Cuba, but that the pace of this work has been greatly accelerated in the last few days.

AMBASSADOR: I assure you that this should cause you no concern whatsoever. Those weapons are only defensive. They will never be used to attack you. Surely you know that.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: We know you are too experienced a diplomat, Mr. Ambassador, not to realize how much concern they must cause us.

(107) AMBASSADOR: But I must tell you I realize how much concern the Cubans feel about the daily violation of their air space by your intelligence planes, contrary to international law.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: The Cubans know quite well that this is not a normal situation, and that the only reason we are sending over unarmed reconnaissance planes is that you and they are setting up nuclear missile bases. But this situation, as you and they must also realize, has now passed the point of general concern, and has reached what we must all recognize as an acute crisis. We have just received word that one of our unarmed U-2 planes has been shot down, and the pilot has been killed.

AMBASSADOR: That is very regrettable.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL:** It is more than regrettable. I will be perfectly frank with you, Mr. Ambassador. It is our fixed policy that if our unarmed photographic planes are shot at, we will have to shoot back and destroy the source from which they were attacked. Normally, we would be doing that right now, but the President wanted me to confer with you in order to make sure there was no possible doubt or misunderstanding of our policy on the Soviet side. We both know the catastrophic implications of an armed conflict between our two countries. The President wants me to say to you that you are forcing our hand.

**AMBASSADOR:** But isn't it you who are initiating the use of illegal force? Even if your planes are unarmed, they are illegally invading the air space of Cuba, a sovereign country. And you have set up an armed blockade of Cuba, which you have no right to do.

**ATTORNEY GENERAL:** Mr. Ambassador, you know this involves not only Cuba, and not mainly Cuba. You know that if we had not used these photographic planes we would still be believing what Chairman Khrushchev told us more than once — that he would send no nuclear missiles to Cuba. This involves military relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, and because of that it involves the fate of people all over the globe.

**AMBASSADOR:** But what need is there for a world crisis if both our governments act normally?

**ATTORNEY GENERAL:** Mr. Ambassador, our two countries have different standards of what is normal. Let us not lose time arguing about that, as we have very little time left to avert disaster. We cannot accept the fact that the Soviet Union secretly established missile bases in Cuba while at the same time proclaiming privately and publicly that this would never be done. We must have a commitment by tomorrow that those bases will be removed.

**AMBASSADOR:** Are you giving us an ultimatum?

**ATTORNEY GENERAL:** Mr. Ambassador, I am giving you a simple statement of fact. You must understand that if you do not remove these bases, we will remove them.

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107, 108 . "I replied that if we had not violated the Cuban air space, we would still be believing what Khrushchev had said — that there would be no missiles placed in Cuba."

108 . . . "We had to have a commitment by tomorrow that those bases would be removed. I was not giving them an ultimatum but a statement of fact. He should understand that if they did not remove those bases, we would remove them. President Kennedy



AMBASSADOR: Is that what the President instructed you to say to me?

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Exactly that. And he instructed me to tell you that he has great respect for your country, and for the courage of your people. He realizes that your country might feel  
(108) it necessary to take retaliatory action; but before that is over, there will be not only dead Americans, but dead Russians as well. *(There is a perceptible pause before the Ambassador speaks.)*

(108) AMBASSADOR: You are asking a great deal of us, as I am sure you understand. What offer are you making in return?

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Today the President replied to the last two letters that Chairman Khrushchev sent him. He accepted the conditions laid down by the Chairman in his first letter: you will destroy or remove the missiles from Cuba, and agree to send no more; we will lift the blockade and agree not to invade Cuba.

AMBASSADOR: But that was only part of our proposal. What about your removing your missiles from Turkey if we remove ours from Cuba?

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Mr. Ambassador, there can be no quid pro quo or any arrangement of that kind made under this sort of  
(108) threat or pressure. Besides, that is a decision that would have to be taken by Nato as a whole.

AMBASSADOR: If you want it, I imagine that it will not be difficult for you to convince Nato that it is necessary.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: In any case, Mr. Ambassador, nothing can be done about that now. I can tell you that the President has been of the opinion for some time that those missiles should be re-

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had great respect for the Ambassador's country and the courage of its people. Perhaps his country might feel it necessary to take retaliatory action; but before that was over, there would be not only dead Americans, but dead Russians as well. He asked me what offer the U.S. was making, and I told him of the letter that President Kennedy had just transmitted to Khrushchev. He raised the question of our removing the missiles from Turkey. I said there could be no quid pro quo or any arrangement made under this kind of threat or pressure, and that in the last analysis this was a decision that would have to be made by Nato."



(109) moved not only from Turkey but also from Italy. He ordered their removal some time ago, and we believe that after this crisis is over it will be possible to carry that out. But that is a separate question, which cannot enter into this settlement. The President wishes to have peace between our two countries. He wishes to solve the problems that confront us in Europe and Southeast Asia. He wishes to move forward on the control of nuclear weapons. However, those matters cannot be tied to this problem. We can make progress on those matters only when this crisis is behind us. Time is running out. We have only a few more hours, and we need an answer immediately from the Soviet Union. We must have it by tomorrow.

AMBASSADOR: All this is exactly what the President instructed you to say?

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Exactly.

AMBASSADOR: This is his last word?

ATTORNEY GENERAL: His last word.

AMBASSADOR (*rising and giving a curt nod*): Goodbye, sir.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Goodbye, Mr. Ambassador. (*Exit Ambassador. Attorney General returns to his desk and starts to make notes. Intercom buzzes.*)

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes?

VOICE ON INTERCOM: The President is on the line, sir. (*Attorney General picks up phone.*)

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Jack?

PRESIDENT'S VOICE: I was in your building, and I told your secretary to let me know when he was gone.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Good. Can you step in?

PRESIDENT'S VOICE: I'll be right there. (*Attorney General resumes his note-taking, and after a moment the President walks in and sits down with an air of weariness and dejection.*)

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109 . . . "I said President Kennedy had been anxious to remove those missiles from Turkey and Italy for a long period of time. He had ordered their removal some time ago, and it was our judgment that, within a short time after this crisis was over, these missiles would be gone . . . However, we could make progress on these matters only when the crisis was behind us."

109 . . . "We had only a few more hours — we needed an assurance immediately from the Soviet Union. I said we must have it the next day."

PRESIDENT: Did you tell him everything?

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Everything.

PRESIDENT: What did he say?

ATTORNEY GENERAL: I was just making notes. His line was what we expected. The missiles are defensive. There is nothing for us to worry about. Our U-2s are violating international law. We have no right to set up an armed blockade of Cuba.

PRESIDENT: You told him we would begin removing the missiles tomorrow if we didn't have a commitment from them?

ATTORNEY GENERAL: I certainly did.

PRESIDENT: What did he say?

ATTORNEY GENERAL: He said, how about our removing our Turkish missiles?

PRESIDENT: And you told him nothing doing.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: Exactly. I said there could be no quid pro quo or any arrangement under this kind of threat. *(There is silence for a moment as the Attorney General looks at the President, and the President looks into the distance.)*

PRESIDENT: You know what disturbs me most about this whole thing?

ATTORNEY GENERAL: What?

PRESIDENT *(speaking slowly)*: It's the thought of the children. That's what makes the prospect of war so much more fearful than it would otherwise be: the death of the children of this country  
(106) and all the world — the young people who have no role, who have no say, who know nothing even of the confrontation, but whose lives will be snuffed out like everyone else's. They will never have a chance to make a decision, to vote in an election, to run for office, to lead a revolution, to determine their own destinies.

ATTORNEY GENERAL: I know what you mean. The adults have had their fling, for better or worse. The children have the most to lose. Are you optimistic about the outcome now?

PRESIDENT: No, I'm not. Are you?

ATTORNEY GENERAL: No, I'm not either. It's all up to Khrushchev now. It all depends on whether he will change his course with-  
(109) in the next few hours.

PRESIDENT: I hope he will, but I don't expect him to. I expect the military confrontation to begin tomorrow or the day after. I've  
(109) ordered twenty-four troop-carrier squadrons of the Air Force Reserve to active duty. They will be necessary for an invasion. All we can do now is wait, hope and pray. (*End of scene.*)

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109 . . . "I returned to the White House. The President was not optimistic, nor was I. He ordered twenty-four troop-carrier squadrons of the Air Force Reserve to active duty. They would be necessary for an invasion. He had not abandoned hope, but what hope there was now rested with Khrushchev's revising his course within the next few hours. It was a hope, not an expectation. The expectation was a military confrontation by Tuesday and possibly tomorrow . . . "



## ACT IV

*Scene 1. The same evening, past 11 o'clock. A small chapel of the Washington Cathedral. A gold cross shines from the middle of the altar. To one side is a large crucifix. On the other side of the altar is a statue of the Virgin and Child (or a painting of the same). The chapel is empty. Lois and Steve walk in and seat themselves.*

STEVE: So this is your favorite chapel.

LOIS: Yes. I only come here at odd hours, when there's no one else here.

STEVE: No one else but God.

LOIS: God? Oh, of course.

STEVE: You seem surprised. Don't you pray to God here?

LOIS: Well, not really. I just think.

STEVE: You're not sure about God, are you?

LOIS: I don't think about God. I just think about things. Are you sure there's no God?

STEVE: I'm sure God hasn't got a beard.

LOIS: I didn't mean that.

STEVE: But that's the whole point. What people identify as God is somebody with a beard who made the whole universe out of nothing. But for God to make something out of nothing is even more absurd than for God to have a beard.

LOIS: How do you figure that?

STEVE: From nothing only nothing could come. If you say God created the universe, then it didn't come from nothing; it came from God. If God made it, he made it out of himself.

LOIS: But that sounds weird.

STEVE: Of course it's weird. That's the trouble with God. You don't need a God to make the universe, because it was always there.

That is, there was always some form of existence, and it just keeps on evolving through various stages. You get new forms of existence from old forms, but since you never get existence from non-existence there must always have been existence. In other words, the universe is a series of things without beginning or end, and one thing comes logically from another, according to laws of nature.

LOIS: But how about the beginning? Doesn't every series have to have a beginning?

STEVE: No. The universe is like the series of numbers. There's no beginning number. You get back to 1 and then zero, and then negative numbers, minus 1, minus 2, and so on without end. There's no lowest number, because no matter what low number you choose, there's always a number that's lower, that is, minus more. And there is no highest number. No matter how high the number is you can always add one. So you have a series without beginning and without end, and that's the way the series of existence is. God the Great Beginner is an absurdity — something impossible to exist, like the lowest or highest number. But God the Great Lover is not absurd, and you do need him, or her.

LOIS: Why do you have to joke about this?

STEVE: I'm not joking. It's just another way of saying God is love. That's even in the Bible. Look. Isn't that a Bible over there? Let me see. *(Lois hands it to him, and he opens it up.)* Let me show you what St. John says. He's my favorite saint.

LOIS: Your favorite saint? I thought you were an atheist.

STEVE: Why can't an atheist have a favorite saint? I was brought up a Catholic. I used to be an altar boy, but I wasn't religious then; I was only a believer. Now I'm a religious atheist, all according to St. John. Let me read to you from the First Epistle of St. John, Chapter IV, *(runs his finger down the page)* verse 8 *(reads)*: "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love." And he goes on, in verse 12: "No man has seen God at any time . . ." You notice, he doesn't believe in beards. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us." You see, God is even in the atheists, as long as they're lovers. And in verse 16 he says it again: "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." The best one is verse 20: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" There's a saint an atheist can go for.

LOIS: I like all that about God is love. It's really beautiful.



STEVE: And angry. You can tell he's angry. He's calling the Cardinal a liar to his face.

LOIS: What Cardinal? What do you mean?

STEVE: Last year I had to do some research on the cold war, and I began to collect items showing what the religious leaders had been saying about communist countries. I remember a speech made by an American Cardinal in which he said that every communist was a master of deceit, and every one that came here from a communist country should be treated as a spy. Could a man say a thing like that against a whole class of people, people from all over the world, and claim to love his brother? It's not a question of whether communists are right or wrong. It's a question of whether all men are brothers. That Cardinal doesn't believe that all men are brothers; he doesn't believe in the God of love. Look at the way he acts toward millions of his brothers.

LOIS: It seems strange that a Cardinal wouldn't believe in God, but I guess actions speak louder than words.

STEVE: I remember another report I found of a nation-wide speech made in 1946 – 1946, only one year after the end of World War II – by a famous Christian cleric who was president of a big university. It was reported both in the New York Times and The Boston Evening American. For some reason the date sticks in my mind – October 17. So do the words. He too was speaking about the communist countries. And remember, of all the countries on our side, the Soviet Union and the others that went communist made the most sacrifices, gave the most lives for the victory in World War II. This great Christian said: "The only language that such nations understand is force. The United States had better pile up armaments sky high to meet the threat of communism with bigger and better bombs."

LOIS: Did he really say that?

STEVE: Yes. I have the clippings to prove it: "bigger and better bombs". That's what he has faith in. Does that man believe in the God of love? When he and the Cardinal say they do, aren't they liars? Yet, think of their influence. They are accepted by millions as representatives of God on earth, authorized and ordained to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, according to St. John. And this is happening in the twentieth century. It makes my blood run cold. It chills my soul. *(He jumps to his feet and flings his arms out wide.)* Give me love. Restore me to life. Take me back to the God of St. John. *(Lois jumps up and embraces him in a long kiss, and they resume their seats.)* Let's change the subject. Or maybe it's



the same subject. You haven't told me yet what happened today about the missile crisis.

LOIS: There were terrific developments today. That's why I had to work so late.

STEVE: I suspected that was it. What did they do?

LOIS: Well, it seems they received two more letters from Khrushchev, and today they had to decide what to do about them.

STEVE: What was in the letters?

LOIS: Khrushchev said he would remove his missiles from Cuba if we removed ours from Turkey.

STEVE: That sounds fair enough. Then there won't be any war, and the world won't be destroyed, and we can go on worshipping the God of love until we both reach a hundred.

LOIS: No. It's very complicated. It's not like that at all.

STEVE: What's the hitch?

LOIS: In the first place, it seems our missiles in Turkey are really obsolete, and the President had ordered them removed before this thing ever came up, but the Turks couldn't understand, or something like that, and it was never done.

STEVE: And you mean the Russians found this out, and withdrew their offer?

LOIS: No. The President and the majority of advisers decided that even though the missiles are obsolete, the offer couldn't be accepted because it would seem like giving in to a threat from the Russians.

STEVE (*his voice rising*): WHAT?

LOIS: Not so loud. Someone might be around.

STEVE: God is around, and he's weeping.

LOIS: So they sent a letter to Khrushchev, saying that he must begin to remove his missiles by tomorrow, without any deal about our missiles in Turkey, or else we will bomb their missiles and bases in Cuba.

STEVE: Do we really mean it?

LOIS: Yes. Everything is ready for an invasion of Cuba.

STEVE: They expect the Russians to give in without a fight?

LOIS: No. They don't.

STEVE: They don't? What do they expect will happen?

(109, 6) LOIS: They expect the Russians will fight, and that it will become a world war fought with nuclear weapons, and everybody will be killed.

STEVE: Did they actually say that's what they expect?

(109) LOIS: Yes. The way they put it was they hope Khrushchev will give in, but they don't expect him to.

STEVE: And did they also say they expect the war will kill everybody?

(106) LOIS: Yes, and the notes said that's what disturbs the President the most. I mean, that all the children of the world would die, along with everyone else, because the children hadn't even lived yet.

STEVE: Wait a minute. Let me make sure I've got this straight. They themselves admit that the Turkish missiles are obsolete?

(94-5) LOIS: "Obsolete and useless." I read it carefully.

STEVE: But they refuse to remove them in exchange for the removal of the Cuban missiles?

LOIS: Yes.

(109) STEVE: And they still insist that if the Cuban missiles are not removed, they will start a war.

LOIS: Yes.

STEVE: And they expect the war to be fought with nuclear weapons?

(52) LOIS: Yes. Our B-52 bomber force has already been ordered into the air, fully loaded with atomic weapons.

(109, 6) STEVE: And they expect it will kill everybody and end the world!

LOIS: Yes. I almost screamed when I read it. It's horrible. It's a crime.

STEVE (*reflectively*): A new crime, so unspeakable it has never been given a name — to kill off the entire human future. Do you realize, Lois, that this is the first time in the whole history of mankind that a group of people possessing the physical power to exterminate the human race, to end the human world, deliberately took a decision which they consciously expect will have that very result?

LOIS: I'm not interested in the historical part of it. Think of the suffering that everyone will have to go through. I saw documen-



tary films of Hiroshima, and shots of people in the hospitals, what the bombs did to them. But you never saw the lucky ones. The lucky ones were turned to jelly in a second. Others had only parts of their bodies turned to jelly, half their skin melted away, half their bones turned to charcoal — babies, old people, all ages. Even in a hospital being taken care of they looked like the worst sinners being punished in Hell. But now the whole world will be Hiroshima, only there won't be any hospital to take anybody to. The whole earth will become an incinerator that can't be turned off, and the people will be like rats caught at the bottom, with no place to run. What will happen before everybody's dead? How long will it take? Days? Weeks? Months? What can we do? *(She puts this last question in a rising voice, as she beats her fists against her knees, and tears start in her eyes.)*

STEVE *(dejectedly)*: Nothing now, I'm afraid. It should have been done before.

LOIS: But what right have they to decide it's time for the whole world to end, for everybody to die? It's like a nightmare. It makes no sense to say the world must come to an end if the Russians won't remove their missiles from Cuba.

STEVE: Especially when the Russians are willing to do it if we will remove ours from Turkey.

LOIS: But even if the Russians weren't willing to do that, even if the Russians were entirely in the wrong, like robbers who break into a house in the night and say, give me your money or we'll kill the whole family, only a madman would say it's better to have the whole family killed off. Even the police tell you it's better to let them take the money. Don't these men understand that life is the most precious thing?

STEVE: They think it's better to be dead than red; life won't be worth living if the communists are allowed to move in on our street.

LOIS: If they feel that way, they can move out or commit suicide by themselves. But they have no right to decide the question for everyone else. They have no right to blow up the whole street and kill off everybody. Maybe the others could find a way to live in peace with the communists, or a way to get the better of them without ending the world, or the others might even like communism. But it's absolute madness for a few men to decide that it's better for the human race to be exterminated once and for all!

STEVE: The end of the world! It's hard to get used to. You always think of death with other people going on living. But the whole earth with no living thing — not a person, not an animal, not a plant,



every inch sterilized by radiation, no life or growth of any kind — that's not even a desert, because a desert has many forms of life. Total sterilization is much worse than death; it's the only thing that's worse than death.

LOIS: What do you mean by that?

STEVE: I mean, when you come to think of it, death as we've known it up to now has been a sort of form of life, a transformation of one kind of life into another kind of life. The thing that died broke up and combined again with other forms of living matter, and the cycle of life went on and on because the cells themselves were not destroyed. But atomic destruction stops the cycle. That's why it's worse than death. It deprives death of its relation to life. It makes death absolute. It's the death of God without the resurrection. It's the death of the God of love. If you kill life, you kill love. If you kill love, you kill God.

LOIS: I still don't understand how they could do it.

STEVE: You know something? It might help to try to understand. I mean, let's try to put ourselves in their places. We're all going to die with them anyway, and since it's from their point of view that we're going to die, let's see how things look from that point of view. *(Pauses.)*

LOIS: Go ahead. I'll stop you if I think of anything better.

STEVE: OK. We're the leaders of the United States government, the strongest military power in the entire world. We have more missiles, more bombs, more guns, more planes, more ships and more money than any other government in the world. Think of what that must do to our minds. It makes us feel that we have a duty, a responsibility — that becomes one of our favorite words — to make every other government salute us, to acknowledge that we are on top. If we don't achieve that result, we not only feel we are lacking in manhood and dignity, we feel we're letting the whole country down, betraying our trust to the entire nation, just like a top general who feels someone lower in the ranks has deliberately neglected to salute him. In itself it's a small thing, that salute, only a snap of the hand, but what it represents is tremendous. To ignore it calls in question the whole meaning and dignity of the armed forces — rank, authority, the code. A violation of that can't go unpunished without undermining the system.

LOIS: Some system!

STEVE: I know, but it's the system we've got. Now the code that goes with that system, the very essence of the code, is inequality.

The very meaning of being higher up is that you can be careless about lower down, but lower down can't be careless about you. You can threaten them, but they can't threaten you. You can lie to them, but they can't lie to you. For them to try to act as your equal puts your whole way of life in question. You'd rather die than accept it. In themselves the missiles weren't the main thing. The main thing was that the Russians were behaving toward us the way we behaved toward them. They were behaving as our equals.

LOIS: Do you think it's as simple as that?

STEVE: That's not so simple, but yes, there is more to it than that. You know these stories you read every day in the newspaper about how people kill each other over mere trifles, over what seems like nothing at all? I remember one was about who should put the next coin in a vending machine. It didn't really matter. Both men had coins, and the machine was well stocked, but each one thought he was first, and in the end one of them lay dead. It wasn't about a pack of cigarettes. It was about someone who had to be first, and someone else who wouldn't acknowledge it.

LOIS: But don't you have to be crazy, or sick or something, to carry it to the point of killing one another?

STEVE: Well, it probably helps to be crazy, but there are other factors that add up to the same result.

LOIS: What, for instance?

STEVE: The relations that already exist between the two parties, how they feel about each other, what they fear about each other. We're capitalism and they're communism, and the capitalist sees in the communist not just a competitor but an enemy, someone who's threatening his very way of life. When each sees the other approaching the vending machine a terrific tension arises that wouldn't arise at all if the other were just an ordinary competitor within the same system, someone who accepted the values of that system.

LOIS: Yes, I can see that.

STEVE: And it becomes worse when the other fellow is seen not only as a private enemy — everybody has his private enemies, but they're only his; he doesn't feel he can act as if they're everybody's enemies — but as a public enemy. That is, as an enemy that all the accepted institutions — the church, the school, the state, the economic system, the press, movies, television, radio, the whole bit — tell him he must regard as not only an enemy, but the enemy, Public Enemy No. 1. That means Enemy No. 1 of all that's good — civilization, culture, religion, morality, Almighty God. Then it be-



comes worthwhile to die, as long as you're sure that enemy is going to die with you. That makes it right that everyone should die rather than to allow that enemy to live.

LOIS: I can see how they could feel they're doing right from that point of view. But why don't they see that their point of view is all wrong?

STEVE: Because it's the point of view that goes with being on top, being higher up (even if you're not actually higher up and on top, but only hope to be), and they don't want to give that up. So the world and all that's good will be destroyed to save it from the enemy of all that's good.

LOIS: But that's too stupid. You can't save anything by destroying it.

STEVE: Oh, how I love your logical mind! (*Jumps up, puts his arms around her, and they have a warm kiss.*) You know, I made up my mind that you must go back to college. Get admitted to Radcliffe. We'll shack together while I go to Harvard Law School.

LOIS: You mean you've called off the war?

STEVE: God! For a minute I actually forgot. It must be that the human mind can't really believe that the world is going to end; it can't hold on to the idea. There's nothing in its experience to attach that idea to. But it is really going to end because the Russian leaders will be just as stupid as ours. They too must prove their manhood and dignity. (*Speaking reflectively, as if to himself*) So we could only hold out for a million years.

LOIS: A million years?

STEVE: I mean man as a species. This is going to wipe man out completely, and end the story of life on the planet earth, so we ought to put the death of man and his planet in perspective, even in the final hours, in a sort of cosmic obituary. You see what I mean?

LOIS: I'm not sure, but go on. I like to hear you talk.

STEVE: A planet is a relatively small body that circles around a star — our sun is the star around which we circle — and nobody can put a limit on the possible number of stars and planets in the universe, nor on the length of time the whole thing has existed. But our planet is the only one on which we can prove that life exists. According to our best evidence, our planet has existed for several billion years — billion, not million — perhaps between five and ten billion. For a large part of that time it was completely covered by water, and simple plant life, forming first in the water,



has existed on it for billions of years. We know from excavated remains that complex animal life has existed on earth for at least five hundred million years, half a billion. Man is a very late arrival in the process of evolution. As a distinct biological species, we have existed for only about a million years.

LOIS: It sounds funny to say "only" a million years.

STEVE: But you have to say "only", because the life span of so many species we know has been hundreds of millions of years. So you see, man as a species has so far been only in his infancy. Most of that infancy, over 95% of it, in fact, has been spent in the life of what we call the cave man, without any written language, and only crude, animal-like sounds and signs for communication, no civilization, no higher culture. It is only in the last two or three per cent of that infancy, in the last thirty or twenty thousand years — perhaps the passage from the infancy to the early childhood of man as a species — that you can speak of civilized humans, with written language and complex culture, arts and sciences. Remember that the very invention of written language took place only six thousand years ago. Only six thousand years from the first crude pictographs on clay tablets to nuclear weapons and the Cuban missile crisis that ended the world. It's infanticide.

LOIS: It's not only that.

STEVE: But I mean in the sense of man being killed off in his infancy as a rational animal. If the youngest of the animal species could progress in six thousand years from absolute illiteracy and almost total scientific ignorance to Shakespeare and Dostoevsky, Newton and Einstein, what would he not be able to do in the next six thousand years, the next six million years, the next six billion years? It is impossible to imagine. We can only say that anything done so far in any art or science would be surpassed far, far more than the work of our greatest men of genius surpasses that of the cave man. But none of this is going to happen. The whole thing is going to stop right here because our leaders have insisted that the Soviet leaders must remove the Soviet missiles from Cuba without any reciprocal arrangement for the removal of the American missiles from Turkey. Lois, it's getting late. I feel terribly tired. It must be nearly midnight. *(Lois glances at her watch.)*

LOIS: Yes, it's almost midnight. Let's get the midnight news before we go. *(Opens up her bag.)* I have a transistor in my bag. *(Takes it out and clicks it on.)*

VOICE FROM RADIO: And we'll return for the news after station identification. *(Sound of telephone ringing on radio, sound of re-*

*ceiver being picked up, and the voice of a middle-aged woman.)*

VOICE OF MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN: Hello?

VOICE OF YOUNG MAN: Hello. Is this Mrs. Henry Thompson of Sacramento, California?

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN: Yes, it is.

YOUNG MAN: I hope I didn't wake you or anything, Mrs. Thompson. I think it's about nine o'clock where you are now?

MRS. THOMPSON: Yes, it is; we're still up.

YOUNG MAN: Good, because I want to send you a case of Campbell's Soup, Mrs. Thompson, from our headquarters here in the East. I'm sure you have a favorite Campbell's Soup in your family, Mrs. Thompson.

MRS. THOMPSON: We sure have. Chicken Noodle's our favorite.

YOUNG MAN: Well, good. Now if you can just sing the Campbell's Soup jingle we'll send you a whole case of Campbell's Chicken Noodle Soup.

MRS. THOMPSON: The Campbell's Soup jingle? Is that *(singing in rather cracked voice)* "Campbell's Soup is good, Campbell's Soup is good, Campbell's Soup is oh, so good, good, good."

YOUNG MAN *(with bland good nature)*: Well, that's close enough. You've been a real sport, Mrs. Thompson, and there's a case of your favorite Campbell's Chicken Noodle Soup on its way to you. Thank you so much for your time.

MRS. THOMPSON: Thank you. Good bye. *(Sound of receiver being hung up, immediately followed by sound of dance music.)*

MALE VOICE: This is the Washington Hilton's Midnight Rendezvous, reminding you that we're open until the wee hours, just above the main lobby. Try some candle light and champagne before you retire. There's no better nightcap and no better champagne in Washington. *(Sound of dance music.)*

STEVE: They'll never get to the news. Even the end of the world has to wait for the commercials. Let's go home. *(Music fades out, and announcer's voice is heard.)*

ANNOUNCER: This is WKN with the midnight news. Reports are now confirmed that official word has been received from the Soviet government in Moscow that it will take immediate steps to remove its missiles from Cuba. The State Department confirms that this will be done in accordance with the terms laid down by the President of the United States. This means that the Cuban missile crisis



is over. (*Steve and Lois stare at each other, wide-eyed, and then jump up and hug each other, without kissing, as the announcer's voice goes on.*) The White House spokesman says that the President is particularly pleased that the American policy of firmness has prevented World War III. The reaction of leading Western governments (19) has been one of warm commendation of the President. Prime Minister Harold Macmillan of Great Britain declared he was in complete support of the President at every stage of the crisis. A similar state- (52) ment was made by German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. President (51) Charles de Gaulle of France said: "It is exactly what I would have done." We repeat the welcome news just received. The Cuban missile crisis is over. We'll continue with the news after this message. (*Steve grabs the transistor and switches it off.*)

STEVE: Did you hear that? The Russians save the world by not fighting, and those who were ready to destroy it by fighting take the credit! Now I've heard everything. They'll certainly try it again. Good God! The crisis is not over. The crisis has just begun.

LOIS: You're right. I'm going to Radcliffe. When shall we look for a shack?

STEVE: Tomorrow. I won't stay in Washington another day.

LOIS: Good. Let's go home now and celebrate.

STEVE: Wait a minute. I feel like saying a prayer before we leave here. (*He kneels down in front of the altar and Lois kneels beside him.*) God of love, I rejoice with you that we have escaped destruction, that there was enough of you in our Russian brothers to prevent the world from being destroyed by power and false pride. They, too, had the power, but refrained from using it, and they overcame their pride for the sake of life and the future. To celebrate this infinitely happy event I now go home with your favorite daughter, Lois. God of love, we know the crisis is not over. We know it will return again and again, for henceforth every nation that has this power will be able to destroy the world, and life, and you, unless the others who have it are strong enough not to use it. We must strengthen you, and you must strengthen us in life and love, now and forever, so that there may be a human world without end.

LOIS: Amen. (*Curtain.*)

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19 . . . Macmillan: "In due course I shall tell the story of my own part; now it is enough to say that it was one of complete support for the President at every stage."

52 . . . "Chancellor Konrad Adenauer of West Germany voiced his support as well."

51 . . . "General de Gaulle said, 'It is exactly what I would have done,' adding that it was not necessary to see the photographs, as 'a great government such as yours does not act without evidence.'"





